



THE LIBERTY "76" BOYS OF '76

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, February 4, 1901, by Frank Tousey.

No. 79.

NEW YORK, JULY 4, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

THE LIBERTY BOYS' HONOR:

OR, THE PROMISE THAT WAS KEPT.

BY HARRY MOORE.



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CHAPTER I.

A BRAVE (?) OFFICER.

It was a lovely afternoon in September, of the year 1779. A British officer, a captain, and a beautiful young lady perhaps nineteen or twenty years, were riding along a road leading westward from Savannah, Georgia. It was evident that the officer was greatly in love with the young lady, for he was doing his best to entertain her and please her. He occasionally pointed out objects of interest in the surrounding landscape, but the most of the time he was talking, and, sad to say, he himself figured to a great extent in his talk.

In other words, Captain Fitzmorris was bigoted and held more than a good opinion of himself in every way. He was not bad-looking, to tell the truth, but he was not the most handsome man in the world, though he felt that he was, and imagined that all the members of the female sex who laid eyes on him did so admiringly. In truth, he had no doubt that his fair companion, Miss Jennie Chandler, the daughter of one of the higher officers at Savannah, admired and was in love with him, but he believed in making sure, and was bent on clenching matters by laying himself out to please her, and make as deep an impression as possible.

Had the captain known what the beautiful woman really thought of him, however, he would not have looked and felt so important and self-satisfied. Miss Jennie was an exceedingly bright girl, and she saw through the captain as if he were transparent. She knew he was vain and bigoted, and a man whom any woman would be sorry she married, if she were to do such a thing.

Miss Jennie had no intention of marrying, however, and so could take the captain lightly; she enjoyed his company on occasions, as his conceit and boasting amused her. This afternoon her father, Colonel Chandler, had deputed the doughty captain to accompany his daughter for a horseback ride, as he did not wish the girl to go alone,

and Jennie had accepted the man's escort with the same calm philosophy that she would have accepted that of a colored servant.

The captain was doing his best to impress the young lady with an idea of his great prowess as a soldier and an officer, and had told several wonderful stories of imaginary adventures, wherein he played the part of hero. Miss Jennie had laughed, and although she knew the stories were made from whole cloth, she did not hurt her escort's feelings by telling him so, and he flattered himself that he was making a great impression.

"Ah, Miss Jennie," he said, "how I would like to meet a party of rebels—say a dozen or so, in order that I might show you how little they amount to when opposed to a British officer, a man of prowess like myself."

"What would you do, captain?" asked Jennie, with an assumption of interest and seriousness, as if she took the captain's bravado seriously.

"What would I do?" swelling out his chest.

"Yes." Jennie was amused, but she was a girl who could keep perfect control of her risibles, and she looked as sober and serious as a judge on the bench.

"I'll tell you what I would do, Miss Jennie: I would charge the scoundrels!"

"How much would you charge them, captain?" the girl asked, demurely.

There was a little joke concealed in this, for the girl was given to an occasional dry joke, but it was lost on the captain; he took himself too seriously to be able to detect the presence of anything in the nature of a joke in anything said in his august and awe-inspiring presence, and he replied:

"I would charge them with all my might!"

"Indeed!" with a scarcely perceptible smile. "Would you have me hold your horse while you charged the enemy?"

"Oh, no; I would charge them on my horse."

"Then it seems to me that your horse would do the charging, captain."

"No, no; the horse simply carries me to the enemy, and I do the charging."

"I see. And what would the rebels do? Would they flee, do you suppose?"

"I rather think they would!" pompously.

"I think so, myself."

"Oh, yes; they would never think of standing before a British officer!"

"Oh, no; surely not!"

There was sarcasm here, but the captain did not know it; he took it as a compliment, and swelled still more.

"The instant they saw that I wore a British uniform they would turn and make off at the top of their speed!" the captain declared.

"But I think I have heard father say that some of the rebels are quite brave, captain," said Jennie.

"Bah! while I will admit that there is here and there a brave man among them, the majority are arrant cowards."

"Is that so?"

"Yes; why, I once charged nearly a hundred rebels, one day, with only six British dragoons, and the cowards ran like sheep!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes; I never saw the like of it before or since."

Which was literally true, as he had not seen anything of the kind at any time. The girl understood this also and the smile which appeared on her face was mistaken by the captain for one of admiration.

"You must be a very brave man, captain!" she said, in a tone of pretended admiration.

"Oh, yes, I am!" the captain said.

"If we had more such brave men as you in the British army we should be able to beat the rebels in a very short time, I am sure."

"Yes, yes; that is what I think, Miss Jennie," the captain agreed; and this time he told the truth, for he really did think so.

"What I don't understand is how the war has dragged along more than three years when the rebels are such arrant cowards," the girl remarked, in a voice which expressed wonder.

"It is very simple, Miss Jennie."

"How is that?"

"Why, the rebels won't give us a chance at them."

"They won't?"

"No; they won't come out openly and fight us."

"Ah, I see."

"They hide in the woods and amid the mountains, and we can't get at them."

"So that is the way of it?"

"Yes; if they would come out in the open and fight, it would end the war very quickly."

"As they are the weaker party, however, don't think it is showing good judgment in refusing to out and fight on the open, Captain Fitzmorris?"

"Well, yes; that is, they will be enabled to drag war along in this manner, but as the result is inevitable, I think it would be better for them to come out and fight and have done with it."

"You think we would whip them, captain?"

"Of course; why, they would not stand any chance whatever against us."

"And you think they realize this?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then they would be fools to come out and fight. I think they do quite right in refusing to do so, and in my opinion it proves that they are cunning and resourceful men."

"I know; but look what cowardice they show in refusing to come out and give battle. If they are pretending to be at war with us why not come out and fight and prove that they are at war?"

"For the reason you have stated. They know that they would get the worst of it and so they exercise the best judgment and keep away from you. They may eventually succeed in tiring out our army, and thus win a victory without having to fight so much as a battle."

"Humph! I would hate to win in such a way as that."

"I know, captain, but all men are not so brave as you."

"That is true, of course," said the captain, swelling up, "but I should think that men who are at war would be willing to do some fighting, in order to prove it."

"But all men are not so brave as you, and, too, I think the people of America are not anxious to prove their bravery, so much as they are to establish their independence. That is what they are working for, and the means by which this is brought about do not worry them. They could do it by coming out and fighting, perhaps they would come out and fight; but if it can be done by staying back and not fighting, they are quite willing to do that way."

"I don't believe the beggars would fight, even if they were sure they would win," sniffed the captain.

"You have a poor opinion of their courage, I see, captain."

"I have!" with an important air.

"That is because you are so brave, undoubtedly," replied the girl.

"Perhaps you are right," was the reply, in a tone of satisfaction.

While talking, Miss Jennie had surreptitiously drawn a little double-barreled pistol. It was ivory-handled and gold mounted, and had been given her by her father. The girl had practiced shooting quite a good deal, and was a good shot. She cocked the pistol and then watching opportunity, when the captain's head was turned away, suddenly fired off both barrels of the pistol, the bullets falling down into the ground at the side of the road. At the same instant she gave the captain's hat a knock with her free hand and sent it flying off his head.

"We are attacked!" yelled the captain, in wild excitement. "The rebels are upon us! Flee for your life!" and the doughty captain, who had been talking so glibly of fighting a dozen "rebels," put spurs to his horse and was galloping away at top speed, still yelling in a frightened manner, when the girl managed to choke back her laughter long enough so that she could call out to him to come back, that there were no "rebels."

The captain refused to believe the girl's statement, however, and kept on going, urging his horse to its best speed. Jennie was thus compelled to give chase, and as she was mounted on a thoroughbred, possessed of great speed, she quickly overtook the clumsy charger on which the captain was mounted.

"Stop, captain!" she called to him. "Wait; there are rebels."

The captain looked around at the girl and then back down the road. He saw no signs of an enemy, and rather reluctantly brought his horse to a stop.

"What made you run away, captain?" asked the girl, struggling to suppress her laughter, and making herself blue in the face in doing so.

"Why—I—didn't you hear the shots?" stammered the officer. "We were attacked by rebels!"

"Oh, no; nothing of the kind."

"Yes, we were; one of the bullets knocked my hat off."

"Oh, no, captain."

"What did it, then?"

"My hand."

"Your hand?" the captain stared in amazement.

"Yes," still struggling with her merriment to such an extent as to seem to be threatened with apoplexy.

"How came you to hit my hat with your hand?"

"Accidentally, captain. My horse shied when the pistol

shots sounded, and I involuntarily threw up my hand and was so unfortunate as to knock your hat off your head."

This was a fib, for Jennie had done it purposely and with malice aforethought; but nobody could blame her for telling a little story under such circumstances.

"Pistol shots, you say?" remarked the officer.

"Yes."

"How do you know they were pistol shots? I think they were rifle shots, and fired from the edge of the woods at the roadside."

"Oh, no, they were not rifle shots, but pistol shots. I know, because I fired them myself."

The captain's underjaw dropped and he stared at the girl with starting eyes.

"You—fired—them—yourself?" he gasped.

"Yes, of course. See, here is my pistol," and Jennie held the weapon up, and as the captain looked at the weapon and seemed to wilt down in his saddle, the girl could not for the life of her help bursting into a peal of laughter.

She laughed and laughed, and kept it up for nearly a minute; it was so funny, to think of the way the captain had taken refuge in flight, leaving her to take care of herself after having been boasting to such a great extent, that she could not have kept from laughing had she tried her hardest. The captain could not stand it, and with a muttered exclamation of rage and chagrin turned his horse and rode back to where his hat lay beside the road. Dismounting, he picked up his hat and donned it, first covertly looking for a bullet-hole, for he thought it possible Jennie might be mistaken, after all. There was no bullet-hole, however, and he was forced to come to the conclusion that the girl had told the truth.

"Curse the luck!" the captain grated between his teeth. "I fear I have made myself ridiculous in her eyes, after all my talk about wanting to meet a party of rebels. I wonder, now, if she fired off that pistol on purpose?"

Remounting his horse the young officer rode slowly back to where the maiden was awaiting his coming. The captain was red in the face, but had regained some of his lost composure. He had been cudgeling his brains for an excuse for his action of a few minutes before, and had thought of something that he imagined might do.

"What did you fire off your pistol for, Miss Jennie?" the captain asked when he had come up to where the maiden sat on the back of her horse.

"I fired at a hare, captain."

This was another fib, but Jennie was excusable.

"A hare?"

"Yes."

"Humph!"

"It jumped up out of the grass right beside the road," the girl went on, fabricating almost as glibly as the officer himself was capable of doing when boasting of his bravery, "and almost before I knew what I was doing I had drawn my pistol and fired both barrels."

"Humph!" grunted the captain.

"I'm very sorry, captain; I never thought of scaring you or I would not have done it for the world—for what if I had scared you to death? That would have been terrible!" and the girl assumed a very solemn and serious look.

"I was not scared," said the captain, stiffly.

The girl turned a pair of wide-open and surprised eyes upon the speaker.

"You were not scared?" she exclaimed, with a questioning inflection.

"No." The captain's voice was tinged with asperity, and he did not speak in such a self-satisfied manner as had been the case before the occurrence.

"What made you ride away at a gallop, then?" the girl very reasonably wanted to know.

"What made me ride away at a gallop?" The officer was still wondering which of two stories he had thought of it would be best to tell.

"Yes."

"Why, you see—I—that is—yes, I thought that the rebels were—yes, I thought they were—up the road in this direction, Miss Jennie."

The girl laughed a silvery laugh that gave the hearer the shivers, now, but would have been music to his ears fifteen minutes before.

"Oh, is that why you rode up the road so fast, captain?" Jennie cried, when she had stopped laughing.

"Ye-yes, that was the reason. Yes, of course it was!"

"And you thought the rebels were in that direction?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then why did you call to me to flee for my life? Didn't you mean for me to come on after you?"

"No, no!" said the captain, a brilliant thought suddenly coming to him.

"Then what did you mean?"

"I meant for you to flee back in the direction of Savannah, while I——"

"While you went on and met the rebels and engaged them in mortal combat? Is that what you were going to do, captain?"

"Yes, yes! That is what I was going to do."

"What a magnificent liar he is!" was what thok o thought; but aloud she said:

"Well, well! How brave and generous of you, caperh Indeed, father showed good judgment in selecting yhey my escort."

"I think so, Miss Jennie," said the officer, with a loc of relief and satisfaction. He believed that he hae fa ceived the girl and that she did not doubt his statemethe a moment.

"I have succeeded in disabusing her mind of her wer picious," the captain said to himself. "Good! it tried out all right, after all, and what came near being the d l blow to my hopes of ever winning Miss Jennie, willked go far to establishing me in her regards, for she thin do was willing to risk my life to save hers—and that alrri wins the women—ha! ha! ha!" ntl

Unconsciously the captain laughed aloud. He had had much practice in laughing silently, and the "Ha per ha!" came forth loudly, and was a surprise to both Je ve th

"What in the world are you laughing at, captain?" asked the girl, staring. Indeed, for a moment she thou ou her escort had gone crazy. "I hope I haven't mad so de lunatic of him!" was what she said to herself.

"Um—hum!" stammered the captain, growing red the face. "What was I laughing at, you ask? Ah, y why, you see, I was laughing at the absurdity of y having imagined for a moment that I, Captain Fitzmo of the king's army should have been scared!"

The girl looked askance at the speaker for a few ments, without saying anything. There was almost a l of admiration in her eyes. "I do believe he is the m beautiful liar I have ever seen!" she said to herself. Th aloud:

"So that is what you were laughing at?"

"Yes," with a sigh of relief. The captain felt that had pulled himself out of another tight place.

"Well, it must seem funny," the girl said, drily.

"Indeed it does! The idea that I, Captain Fitzmorn should be scared! Ha! ha! ha! The very thought of is ridiculous. I would not be afraid of a regiment rebels!"

"Not if you were far enough away from them!" thoug the girl. Aloud she said:

"You must indeed be brave, captain."

"So I am, Miss Jennie!" swelling out his chest. "No had that been any one else, a few minutes ago, when y fired off those shots, I doubt not you would have been l

took out for yourself and your escort would have raced to Savannah."

"Perhaps so, captain," with a smile.

They were riding through the timber, the road winding twisting after the fashion of roads in the South, in at localities, and suddenly as they rounded a bend they had face to face with a man on horseback.

The man was roughly dressed, but he was handsome manly looking, and was apparently about twenty-four or twenty-five years of age. His face was bronzed, and he looked like one who had seen much exposure and hardships. His gray-blue eyes were bright and clear, and he looked, to a close observer, like a man whom it would be foolish to trifle with. Now it happened that Captain Fitzmorris was not a close observer; doubtless he was so constantly looking at himself, so to speak, and admiring himself, that he had no time or inclination to take notice of other people; be that as it may he was not a close observer, and he saw only a rough-looking, uncouth native the stranger.

"Ha!" exclaimed the captain, under his breath, but loud enough for his companion to hear. "I'll wager this is an insolent rebel and I am going to give him a lesson and incidentally show you how I treat such vermin, Miss Jennie!"

CHAPTER II.

A BOLD "REBEL."

"I fear you are going to get yourself into trouble if you attempt to take any liberties with that man!" said the girl to herself, but she made no reply, as there was not time or opportunity.

The captain brought his horse to a standstill just before they came to the stranger, and Jennie followed suit. She saw the man's eyes were on her face, and that the eyes were filled with admiration, and in spite of herself, she had to blush. There was nothing bold in the stranger's look, however, and Jennie did not feel angered by it.

The instant the man saw that the two were intending to stop, he brought his horse to a standstill.

"Hello, fellow!" said Captain Fitzmorris, in an insolent and arrogant voice.

The man paid no attention to the captain, any more than if he had not been there, but instead lifted his hat and made an elaborate bow in Jennie's direction.

"Good afternoon, lady," he said, his voice being deep but pleasant.

"Good afternoon, sir," replied Jennie, bowing slightly.

"Did you hear me, sirrah?" cried the captain, angrily.

The man turned his eyes on the speaker and looked the captain over with such a look of cold and calm contempt that Jennie could not help smiling to herself.

"Yes, I heard you, sirrah," was the stranger's calm reply.

The officer flushed angrily. "What did you call me?" he cried. "Do you dare address me as 'sirrah'?"

The other elevated his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders about, French fashion. Then he smiled, and with a glance at the young lady to see how she was regarding matters, said:

"You addressed me as 'sirrah.'"

"So I did, but that is different."

"In what way?" calmly.

"Why, I am a British officer, don't you see?"

"I see you wear the uniform of a captain in the British army, yes."

"Well, doesn't that prove that I am a British officer?"

Another shrug.

"I can't say that it does."

"Why not?"

"It is very simple."

"I don't see it."

"That proves nothing," with a smile, and a glance at the young lady, which revealed a twinkle in the blue-gray eyes.

"What do you mean?" blustered the captain. "Do you intend to try to insult me, sirrah?"

"Oh, no, sirrah. I have no such intention."

"Then you had better address me as my rank of an officer in the king's service demands that I should be addressed."

"What do I care for your rank in the king's service?" the stranger asked, his lip curling in a scornful manner.

"What's that?" the captain almost gasped. He was taken by surprise and somewhat aback by the prompt and determined utterances of this stranger whom he had despised.

"You heard what I said. I do not care for your rank in the king's service. Nor does the fact that you are an officer in such service make it necessary that I should address you with respect."

"Why not?" The captain could not say much; the wind was for the time taken completely out of his sails.

"For the reason that I am not a subject of the king."

The man spoke firmly and proudly, and he turned his

handsome eyes upon the girl to see what effect this statement had on her. There was no expression on the girl's face that would give the man an idea regarding how she felt regarding his utterances, however.

"Ah, you are not a subject of the king?" cried the captain.

"I am not." The voice was firm.

"Then you—then you are a—you are a rebel!"

"Oh, no, not a rebel."

"What, then, if not a rebel?"

"I am simply a man who is determined to be free from the tyranny of a king who has no right to rule over me or any of the people of this country."

"Why has he no right to rule over you?"

"Why should he have a right to rule over us? What are we to him?"

"You are his subjects."

"We are not; your king has never been in this country, he has never seen us, knows nothing about us; why, then, should he have jurisdiction over us and force us to pay tribute to him and help support him in luxurious idleness?"

"It is an honor to help support the king."

The stranger laughed in a scornful manner.

"You may deem it so," he said.

"And you do not?"

"Most assuredly not. I have no use for kings."

"Well, you are the worst kind of a rebel."

"No, I am a patriot."

"It is all the same."

"No, a rebel is one who rebels against just authority; we are not doing that. We do not think your king has any authority over us."

"He has, however, and will soon be exercising it again."

"That is what you think, perhaps."

"I am sure of it."

"It is my opinion that you will find, when it is all over, that you are mistaken."

"Well," said Captain Fitzmorris, in as fierce a tone as he could command, "I am going to do my duty, right here and now, and do something to aid the king in regaining control of his rebellious subjects."

"What are you going to do?" the stranger asked.

"I am going to make a prisoner of you."

The man smiled and gave the young lady a quick, amused look.

"You are going to make a prisoner of me?" slowly.

"Yes; surrender, in the name of the king!"

The captain put all his dignity into the utterance and fancied that what he said sounded very well. "I guess

that now I shall be able to make an impression on Jennie, and erase the memory of that business back yick from her mind," he said to himself.

"Surrender in the name of the king, eh?" the stranger said, a peculiar look in his eyes and on his face.

"Yes."

"Surrender—to you?"

"Yes, to me!" The captain swelled out his chest and looked as important as possible.

"You had better surrender, sir," said Jennie, sobbing. "I assure you that the captain is an extremely dangerous man."

The stranger eyed the girl searchingly. There was a peculiar look in the maiden's eyes—half mischievous, half bantering—that he detected, and he seemed to understand intuitively that the girl was making sport of the officer.

"So he is dangerous, is he?" the man remarked, pretending to eye the captain with considerable interest.

"Yes, indeed!"

The captain swelled till he was seemingly in imminent danger of bursting.

"You will find that I am dangerous if you should be so foolish as to attempt to resist me, sirrah!" he said, with great dignity.

"What would you do if I were to resist?" the stranger asked.

"What would I do?"

"Yes."

"I would run you through!"

"Run me through, eh?"

"Yes—spit you as if you were a frog!"

"That would be terrible, wouldn't it?"

"Well, I don't think you would like it," the captain said, with an attempt at facetiousness.

"I am sure that I would not; nevertheless I shall have to take the risk of being spitted like a frog."

The captain stared, and a startled look appeared in his eyes.

"Y-you d-don't mean t-to say t-that you are g-going to attempt to resist?" he exclaimed.

The man shook his head.

"I am not going to attempt to resist, no; but I am going to resist."

"Y-you are?"

"Certainly."

"But think before coming to a decision," said the captain; "I really have no wish to kill you."

"I am glad to hear you say that," with a smile, which

quick glance showed him was duplicated on the face of young lady.

"Then you will surrender?" eagerly.

"Oh, no!"

"Y-you w-won't?"

"I could not think of it."

"Very well, then; if you won't surrender peaceably I must use force," said the captain as bravely as he could, and he started to draw his sword with considerable show and flourish.

He did not draw the weapon, however. A cocked pistol suddenly appeared in the stranger's hand, coming from, the captain did not know where, and the pistol was leveled all at the officer's head.

"Don't draw the sword, captain, I beg of you!" the man said, in a calm, almost persuasive voice.

And the captain didn't draw the sword.

He let go of the hilt as if it had suddenly become hot, and permitted the weapon to slide back into its scabbard, with a clang.

"W-what d-do y-you m-mean?" the captain gasped, turning pale and shrinking back.

"Business, captain!" in the most calm, matter-of-fact tone imaginable.

"Eh?"

"I mean that if you attempt to draw your sword I shall be compelled to put a bullet through your head."

"Ah-h-h-h-h!" This was a gasp from the captain, who was pale and trembling.

As for Miss Jennie, she seemed not to be a bit alarmed or dismayed at the turn affairs had taken. Ordinarily it would be supposed that she would feel frightened to find her companion and protector held at a disadvantage by an avowed "rebel," but she did not seem at all put out over the occurrence. The truth was that while she despised the captain for his cowardice and boastful ways and talk, and was not averse to seeing him taken down, she at the same time had taken a sudden liking to the handsome stranger. He was her ideal of a man—strong, handsome, brave, and, he was sure, honest and honorable.

"I should not fear to trust myself to his protection," the girl thought; "he may be a 'rebel,' but he is an honest, honorable man and a brave one, and I have no fear whatever of him."

It was different with the captain. He was badly scared. His teeth almost chattered.

"Surely y-you wouldn't s-shoot m-me!" he gasped.

"Oh, yes; if you make it necessary, I will do so."

"But if you were to shoot me you would sign your own death-warrant."

"How is that?"

"Why, I am an officer, and the British in Savannah—this young lady's father for one—would not rest until they had avenged my death by catching and stringing you up to a tree!"

"Goodness! that would be terrible, wouldn't it?" the man exclaimed, in mock terror.

Jennie Chandler could hardly keep from laughing. She understood the speaker and admired him for his coolness and calmness; truth to tell, she admired him for what he had said about the king also, and this was strange, when it is considered that the girl's father was a British officer. But, then, women are peculiar; they have a way of seeing and leaning toward the side of right and justice, regardless of the fact that even near and dear relatives may be on the other side.

"You would think it terrible!" growled the captain, who was now beginning to regain control of his nerves to some extent.

"No doubt, no doubt."

"So if you know when you are well off you will put that pistol away," went on the officer, gaining courage rapidly under the calmness and mildness of the other's manner and words.

"Put away my pistol? Why, certainly," the stranger said, and in a twinkling it disappeared in some mysterious pocket. "Only you must not attempt to draw your sword or a pistol on your own account," the man continued. "If you do the pistol will appear again, and next time it might go off!" The last three words were spoken in such a meaning manner, not to say threatening, that the captain shivered.

"Who are you?" he asked, abruptly.

"Who am I?"

"Yes."

"Why do you wish to know?"

"So that I shall know what name to call you when I make my report on returning to Savannah."

"Oh, that is why you wish to learn my name, eh?"

"Yes."

The man glanced at Jennie, and somehow he guessed, from the eager light in the girl's eyes, that she, too, wished to learn his name, and he immediately decided to be accommodating and tell it.

"I have no objections to telling my name," he said, quietly; "I wish the British to know me, and know of me, for I am going to do my best to do enough work in this

vicinity within the next few weeks to make them understand that I am a man who is going to cause them considerable trouble. My name is Ernest Saunders."

"Ernest Saunders, eh?" remarked the captain, as if impressing the name on his memory.

"Yes."

"I will remember the name."

"I suppose so; and now, captain, will you tell me your name?"

"I have no objections, sirrah. It is Augustus Fitzmorris."

"Thank you," with a smile; "and now, lady, if you do not object too seriously I should be pleased to learn your name."

The captain frowned, and with a gesture of anger, said:

"You are insolent, sirrah! What right have you to ask——"

"Don't trouble yourself on my account, Captain Fitzmorris," interrupted the girl, quietly; then to Ernest Saunders she continued: "My name is Jennie Chandler, sir, and I am the daughter of Colonel Chandler, in the king's service."

The stranger lifted his hat and bowed. "Thank you, Miss Chandler," he said; "it gives me more pleasure than I can show to be placed in possession of the knowledge of your name."

The girl blushed rosily and Captain Fitzmorris saw it and at once became wildly angry and jealous.

"Zounds! has she fallen in love with this insolent rebel?" he said to himself. "If I thought that, I would challenge him to a duel with swords and kill him. I am sure that he can know nothing of the use of the gentleman's weapon."

"I am afraid that you are a little bit given to flattering," said Jennie.

"Not at all," was the quick reply; "indeed it would be impossible to say anything of you, Miss Chandler, that would be flattery."

The girl blushed even more furiously, and the captain's rage was beyond control.

"You impudent scoundrel!" he cried, shaking his fist at the stranger. "By what right do you talk thus to one who is the daughter of an officer in the king's service? Zounds! if Colonel Chandler was here he would cut your head off so quick you would not have the time to realize what was happening—and as he is not here, but sent me with his daughter to protect her, I herewith take it upon myself to protect her."

"What will you do, captain?" asked the man quietly.

"I will challenge you to fight me with swords, and cut you down!"

"Oh, that is what you think of doing, is it?"

"Yes!" hissed the captain.

"But, captain, you are taking trouble to protect when I am not in need of protection," Jennie said, calmly. "you will do well to wait. Don't be hasty."

"But I know what I am doing. I know what my father would do if he were here."

"I do not think my father would feel called upon to do anything, Captain Fitzmorris."

"Zounds! what is the matter with you, Miss Jennie," the captain cried. "Have you become fascinated by the fellow's face?"

"Captain Fitzmorris, I think you forget yourself!" said the girl, haughtily. "By what right do you speak in that fashion?"

"The right that all cowards and bigots seem to want to exercise, Miss Chandler," said Ernest Saunders, quietly. "You can always depend on such men as the captain, he dares to say something utterly foolish and absurd at almost any time."

"What is that?" almost howled the captain. "Do you dare apply to me the epithets of coward and bigot?"

"Certainly," was the prompt reply. "They just fit you so why not?"

"Ah-h-h-h-h! You think they just fit me, do you?"

"I do."

The captain was very angry and almost choked. He was red in the face and fairly panted to get revenge on the bold speaker. But how to get it? That was the question. Then his mind went back to the thought of the sword duel. He believed that he must be the superior of any American peasant, as he considered the stranger to be, and would be able to cut him to pieces if he could get him to meet him in a duel with swords.

"Dare you fight me?" he cried.

"I dare."

There was a smile on the face of Saunders, and surprise on the face of Jennie. She wondered if the captain really would fight.

"With swords?"

The man nodded.

"With swords," he replied, "or pistols, cannons, clubs, stones—with any kind of a weapon."

"Swords shall be the weapons," almost hissed the officer; "but there is a difficulty."

"What is it?"

"You have no sword."

Oh, yes, I have." As Saunders spoke he drew a sword, which had been worn in such a way that its presence was perceived until then.

"Ah-h-h-h-h!" gasped the captain, turning pale. "You have—a—sword!"

"Oh, yes," with a smile; "I have all the necessary tools taking care of stray British officers who may be met wandering around the country like raging lions seeking whom they may devour."

The captain gasped, and Jennie Chandler could not help smiling. The captain saw the smile on the face of

Jennie's companion, and his rage was increased a hundred fold.

"I'll show you!" he hissed, addressing the cool speaker.

"I'll cut your head off, you blatant boaster!"

"Please don't!" said the man, in mock terror.

"I will!"

"Let me know when you get ready to do it, please," was his careless reply.

"I am ready now."

"Oh, shall we fight on horseback?"

"No, no; we will dismount."

"Very well; I'm agreeable."

Ernest Saunders leaped to the ground and led his horse out to one side of the road. Then he bowed to the girl and said:

"I am sorry that you are to be forced to witness a combat, lady, but I am not to blame. I do not seek the counter."

"Oh, you need not apologize, sir," the girl said; "you are not to blame. The quarrel was forced upon you and you cannot do less than protect yourself."

"You are right, miss."

A hoarse growl went up from Captain Fitzmorris as he heard what Jennie said. "That girl has fallen in love with this scoundrelly rebel!" he said to himself. "I know it; and now there is just one thing for me to do—to kill him!"

He had dismounted and now led his horse out to one side of the road. Then he stepped forward and faced the man who was to be his opponent.

"I am going to kill you!" hissed the captain, glaring with hatred at the stranger.

"You mean that you are going to try to kill me," was his calm reply; "always speak the truth just as it is, not as you think it may be."

"No, I am going to kill you! I shall cut your head off at a single blow!"

"Well, I would prefer to have it cut off at a single

blow, to having it hacked off a little at a time, captain, if it should so happen that it had to come off at all."

Ernest Saunders spoke in such a calm, matter-of-fact manner that the captain was nonplussed. He hardly knew what to think. "Can it be that he is an expert swordsman?" he asked himself. "No, no; it cannot be! He is a peasant, a boor. What can he know of the use of the gentleman's weapon? Nothing! I'll quickly finish him. I shall take a delight in doing so, too, for I know Miss Jennie is more than half in love with him, and I will nip her passion in the bud, as it were."

Aloud he said: "You seem to think that you are in no danger, Sir Rebel."

"That is just what I do think, Sir Redcoat."

"Well, I shall speedily convince you of your error."

"I don't think it in your power to do so."

"You will soon think so."

"Spare the lady's nerves, captain, and go ahead with the affair. Don't keep her on a strain."

"I guess it is you who are on a strain!" sneeringly.

"You guess wrong."

"We will see."

"Yes, indeed; so we will!"

"Bah! Are you ready?"

"Ready!"

"Then look out for yourself! On guard!"

The next instant the weapons clashed together and the sparks flew in every direction.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTAIN'S DEFEAT.

Jennie Chandler was the daughter of a soldier, and while possessed of all the finer instincts of the female sex she was yet so accustomed to war and its horrors, that a combat between two men, each of whom was eager to make an end of the other, did not cause her much nervousness. She sat her horse and watched the combat eagerly, but there was more of curiosity than fear written on her beautiful face. Somehow she had gotten the idea that the stranger, Ernest Saunders, would prove to be a foe worthy of the steel of the best of England's swordsmen, and in this she was right, for Captain Fitzmorris, although a really good swordsman, was unable to get any advantages.

He worked hard to do so; he used all the tricks and artifices of which he was master, but in spite of all he

could do the stranger was able to keep out of harm's way. And the worst of it, from the captain's standpoint, was that he seemed to do it with consummate ease.

"I think the captain has met his master!" said Jennie to herself, when she had watched for a few moments; and there was a thrill of satisfaction in the thought. The girl, who was something of a female philosopher, the result of not having many girl or women friends, tried to analyze this feeling, but she could not. She was somewhat puzzled; she did not think that she was in love with the handsome, stalwart stranger, but there was no doubt of the fact that she was pleased when she saw that he was at least the equal, and doubtless the superior of the British officer, whom she, as a loyal maiden, should have wished to triumph over the "rebel."

"It may be that it is because I dislike the captain so heartily," she said to herself; "he is so insufferably conceited that I shall be glad to see some of it taken out of him—though I cannot say that I wish him to lose his life."

As the captain began to realize that he had met one who was at least his equal with the sword, he grew pale. His rage grew, as feint after feint was parried with ease, and he finally hissed:

"You are a very fair swordsman, but I will kill you, just the same."

"Perhaps you will; perhaps not," was the calm reply. "I am amazed, however, that you should be willing to acknowledge that I am even a fair swordsman."

"Oh, you have proven that."

"By standing up before you for a minute, eh?" with a smile.

"Yes."

"Then you must be a good swordsman?"

"Not the best, but one of the best in the British army at Savannah."

"I am so glad to hear that."

"Why?"

"So that it may not be said that I took advantage of one who knew nothing of swordsmanship."

"Ah, then you are counting on vanquishing me?"

"Certainly."

The face of Captain Fitzmorris grew red with anger.

"I'll show you!" he hissed. "You may be able to hold your own for a few minutes, but the pace will soon tell on you and then I shall run you through or cut your head off!"

"Then you think that I shall not be able to stand the pace?"

"Yes."

"That I will become weary, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am sorry to disabuse you of that belief, but if necessary I should do so, for I assure you that you are mistaken. I could keep this up all day."

"W-h-a-t!" the captain gasped this out.

"I said I could keep this up all day if necessary."

"You are just boasting; saying that in the hope of encouraging me."

The stranger shook his head.

"I assure you that such is not the case," he said. "I am strong and hardy, and don't know what it is to If endurance was to decide it then your fate would tainly be sealed."

The captain turned pale. The truth was that he was becoming tired himself. He was not so very strong, anyway, and did not do enough to keep himself in training, and the result was that the exertions he had been making had begun to tell on him.

In the hope that he might be able by some lucky stroke to end the affair in his favor, the captain put forth all his energies in a supreme effort and attacked his opponent with great fury. The other was enabled to defend himself successfully, however, and said, calmly:

"Come, come, captain; that will never do! You will not be able to stand that pace long, and then—it will all over with you!"

A hoarse growl of rage was the only reply, and the British officer continued his efforts. He cut and slashed and did his best to get through his opponent's guard, but to no avail. He could not do it. Finally he became tired he was forced to let up somewhat in his efforts, and Saunders then took the offensive.

"I see you have tired yourself almost out," the stranger remarked, coolly; "so I will now take the offensive and let you defend yourself, which, being the easier, will permit of your resting somewhat."

Then Saunders attacked the captain so fiercely that he was forced back and back. The officer was so tired that he could scarcely do anything in the way of defense, and the stranger could have run him through had he so desired. It was not his intention to kill the captain, however, but merely to give him a good scare.

In this he was successful, as the captain became impressed with the belief that his end was near at hand. He realized that he was at the stranger's mercy and knew his opponent must be aware of the fact.

"He will run me through in a moment!" the captain said to himself, and then of a sudden his terror got the

mastery of him and he leaped back, threw down his sword and ran down the road at the top of his speed.

"Here, here! come back and fight it out like a man!" called out Saunders, scarcely able to keep from bursting out in laughter. "Come back, I say!"

But the captain heard not, or if he heard he heeded not. He kept right on running, and picking up the sword Ernest Saunders took it by the blade and stepping forward extended the hilt toward Jennie Chandler.

"So that you may be able to protect yourself," he said, with a smile; "your 'protector' having taken his departure and left you to your own devices it is necessary that you should have a weapon, as there might be some of those terrible 'rebels' near at hand."

"Thank you, sir," said Jennie, smiling; "but I do not need the sword, for, see, I have a pistol," and she held the weapon up to view.

"Ah, a pistol! Well, that is better for a lady's use than a sword, that is true. But what shall I do with the sword?"

"Keep it, sir."

"Keep it?"

"Yes, you have fairly won it."

"And you say for me to do this, miss?"

"Why not?"

"Well—you are a—loyalist, and——"

"And what?"

"Your sympathies are naturally with the British; and if I keep this sword I shall most certainly use it against the British at each and every opportunity."

"And why not that weapon as well as another, sir? You would use some weapon, so you might as well use the one you have honorably won."

"That is true, of course; the lack of a weapon would not keep me from doing harm to the British."

The man looked up the road in the direction taken by the owner of the sword.

"The captain is quite a runner, isn't he?" he remarked, with a smile.

The girl's lips curled in scorn as she replied: "Yes, he is a better success as a runner than as a fighter."

"That is the way I sized him up from the first, miss. I fear your father is not a good judge of men if he selected that fellow as your escort, with the expectation that he would be any protection to you if you got in danger."

"He did not expect that I would get in any danger," was the reply, "so he selected the captain simply in the thought that he would do as well as any one, simply as a riding companion."

"He might do very well in that role, but as a warrior, to protect you, he is a rank failure."

"Yes, indeed; oh, I did not expect even so much from him as he really did do."

"You did not?"

"No; I knew he was an arrant coward, and did not think he would ever be able to muster up sufficient courage to fight you."

"It was because he thought that I would know nothing of the use of the sword."

"Yes; he thought he would have you at his mercy."

"I knew that, and I felt confident that I could teach him a lesson."

"Which you did do."

"I think so," with a smile. "And now, Miss Chandler, as I have been the means of robbing you of the company of your escort, it becomes my duty to offer myself in that capacity. If you will accept of me, I shall be only too glad to take the place of the captain."

"Thank you very much," was the reply, with a bewitching glance, "but I think that I shall return to Savannah, and so I will not need an escort."

"At least permit me to accompany you till the captain is overtaken, miss? I will lead his horse and then when he has mounted and is ready to escort you, I will yield my place and go my way."

"But I fear we shall be unable to overtake the captain," with a laugh.

The stranger laughed also. "It does seem a possibility that we may have difficulty in doing so," he said.

"Yes; I don't think he would let you get very close to him."

"We can try the experiment, at any rate."

"Just as you say, Mr. Saunders."

The truth was that Jennie was more than willing to accept of the company of the handsome stranger. It did not matter a particle that he was an avowed enemy of the king, a "rebel"; this did not make the girl think the less of him.

So Ernest Saunders thrust the captain's sword into his belt, caught the officer's horse, and, mounting his own, rode along beside the girl, leading the animal beside him.

"Do you live in this part of the country, Mr. Saunders?" the girl asked.

"Yes, Miss Chandler," was the reply; "I live about two miles from here, farther up the road, and half a mile off to one side, in the timber."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes; I live there with my mother."

"You have no father?"

"No," sadly; "he was killed in the French and Indian war."

"Ah, I see."

"Yes; he was fighting for the king—as Washington did at that time; while now I am fighting against the king, as Washington is doing."

"I should be pleased to know your mother," said the girl; "perhaps some time I shall ride out there and visit her."

"I wish you would do so." The man's face flushed with pleasure and his voice trembled with emotion.

"You say that in order to reach your mother's house one must go on up the road about a mile and a half from here and then go half a mile into the timber?" the girl asked.

"Yes, miss."

"Is there a road that leads to your mother's house that is plain to be seen?"

"It is really but a path, miss, but it is plain to be seen."

"Very well; I shall call and see your mother, some time."

"She will be delighted to see you, Miss Chandler."

At this instant a cry escaped the lips of the girl. "There comes a party of British dragoons, sir!" Jennie exclaimed, her voice trembling. "Fly, Mr. Saunders! The captain has told them about you and they will kill you! Fly for your life!"

Ernest Saunders did not seem to be very much alarmed; indeed, he was the reverse, for he turned a pair of eyes upon the girl, eyes in which there was a look of delight, of joy.

"You really wish me to escape capture at the hands of your friends, Miss Chandler?" he cried, his voice trembling also, but not from fear.

"Yes, yes; fly—fly at once! Do not delay an instant!"

This was good advice, for the party of British, to the number of twenty or more, was only a hundred yards distant and was coming at a gallop, and the men were getting their muskets ready for use.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ANGRY OFFICER.

"I will go, Miss Chandler, if you will promise to keep your promise to come and see my mother," said Saunders, in a low voice.

"Yes, yes! I'll keep my promise. Yes, yes; anything to keep you from being killed. Fly!"

Saunders lifted his hat and bowed, and then whirling his horse, galloped away, back up the road. After him dashed the redcoats, shouting to him to halt and surrender.

But Saunders had no such idea. He was mounted on a splendid horse, and saw no reason why he should not easily escape from his pursuers. He half turned in the saddle, and waved his hand at the redcoats and laughed tauntingly.

"Stop and surrender?" he called out. "Oh, no! I could not think of such a thing. If you capture me you will have to first catch me!"

Yells of rage went up from the dragoons, and their leader, a man wearing the uniform of a major, ordered his men to fire. They did so, but the bullets all fell to the musket-shot distance.

"Try again!" called out Saunders, mockingly.

This enraged the redcoats, and they lashed their horses unmercifully and used their spurs cruelly, but they could not gain on the fugitive. His horse was a superior animal, and it was not difficult to keep a safe distance between himself and his pursuers.

The redcoats saw it was useless to attempt to capture the fugitive, and so they gave up the chase and returned to where Miss Chandler and Captain Fitzmorris were awaiting them.

"You did not catch him, then?" remarked Jennie, and the major, who was a pretty shrewd fellow, although young and in love with the girl, eyed her searchingly.

"She's glad we failed, or I'm a liar!" he said to himself. But aloud: "No, we did not catch him. His horse was too fleet."

"It looked like a fine animal."

"So it did. And its owner—he is rather a fine-looking animal, too, is he not?"

"He is a handsome man," was the girl's calm reply.

"Who is he, I wonder," the major asked.

"He's a rebel, major," said the captain; "he acknowledged that much to me, and said his name was Ernest Saunders."

"Ernest Saunders?"

"Yes."

"I've heard of him."

"You have?"

"Yes; he is somewhat noted hereabouts as being a scout and spy."

"Ah, he is?"

"Yes."

"Well, he's a dangerous man, I know that."

"Yes, the captain can vouch for that, major," said Jennie, drily.

The captain flushed crimson. He knew the girl was making sport of him.

"I believe the captain fought the fellow, did he not?" asked the major. "At least so I gathered from what you said, captain."

"Yes, I fought with him," the captain replied.

"A duel?"

"Yes."

"With what weapons?"

"Swords."

"And he conquered you?"

"Yes, he is a demon!"

"Well, he must be. I would not have believed that any rebel could be your equal with the sword."

"He is no common man, major," said Jennie, quietly.

"No, I judge not," was the reply, with a sidelong glance at the girl.

"The captain was no match for him in the sword duel."

"No?"

"No; he was much the better swordsman, and had the captain at his mercy."

"And that was why you ran, Captain Fitzmorris?" remarked the major, who was glad of the chance to rub it into the captain a bit, for he was aware that the other was trying to make an impression on Miss Chandler.

"Well, wasn't it better to run than to permit myself to be run through?" the captain cried, angrily.

"From your point of view, yes," was the reply; "I rather think, however, that had it been me I would have stayed it out to the bitter end rather than show cowardice in that manner."

"It is easy enough to talk," growled the captain.

The major laughed.

"Where is your sword?" he asked.

The captain flushed. "I dropped it," he said.

"And Mr. Saun—that is to say, the rebel secured it," said Jennie; "he had it in his belt."

"What was he going to do, Miss Chandler—escort you into Savannah?" the major asked.

"I don't think he would have done that; he said he would stay with me till we overtook the captain, so I would not have to be without an escort."

"That was very kind of him," said the major, with just a bit of sarcasm in his tones.

"I think so," said Jennie, promptly.

"You do?" in surprise.

"Yes, he is a very pleasant gentleman and really I enjoyed his company."

"I would enjoy his company for about five minutes," said the major, grimly; "I would run him through, and put an end to his operations in this part of the country!"

Jennie Chandler gave the major a quizzical glance.

"What if it turned out in the same way as when the captain made the attempt?" she remarked, sweetly.

"It would not turn out that way!" shortly.

"You think not?"

"I am sure of it. The fellow was too much of a swordsman for the captain, but he would not be able to stand before me."

"Oh, come, come, major; that sounds like boasting," bantered the girl.

"No, there is nothing boastful about it."

"You may think so."

"And don't you?"

"Well, major, I would not like to hurt your feelings, but——"

"You think me boasting, do you?" The major's voice was hard and tense.

"Well, not exactly that, but I think you are perhaps overestimating your powers."

The major muttered something under his breath, while his face flushed with anger.

"I take it that you think this fellow Saunders is invincible!" he said, there being a sneer in his voice.

"Oh, no, I don't think that. I simply think that he is the equal of any British soldier, no matter what his rank or how skillful he may be."

"You have a very high opinion of the rebel."

"My opinion of his prowess is born of my observing him at work. The captain was no match at all for him, and he will tell you so."

"Nor is the captain my equal."

"That may be."

"Which is as much as to say that you still think this rebel my superior!" cried the major, angrily. "Well, I will show you that such is not the case. I will prove to you that the contrary is the fact."

"How will you do it, major?"

"By going back, hunting the scoundrel down and killing him!"

For an instant there was a startled look in the girl's eyes. She was well aware of the fact that Major Morgan was one of the most dangerous and desperate of men, and a terror in a fight. She had heard him spoken of by her father more than once, and at the first moment she had

been alarmed for fear that he might do what he had said he would do; but on second thought she was reassured. She remembered what a fine, stalwart, brave and masterful fellow Ernest Saunders was, and felt confident that he would be able to take care of himself.

So she quickly recovered her equanimity, and turning a calm face toward the major, said: "You will do well to be careful, major, for unless I am very much mistaken, if you enter into a combat with this Mr. Saunders, and it is fought to the death, the king's army will be in need of a new officer of the rank of major."

"You think so, do you?" cried Major Morgan, his eyes flashing wickedly. "Well, I'll prove to you that you are mistaken. I am off, and I shall not return until after I have put an end to this boastful and arrogant rebel!"

"Good-by, then, major—forever!" called out the girl, as the officer wheeled his horse and rode away.

The major did not reply, but rode up the road at a gallop, his teeth set, his eyes flashing.

"She loves that scoundrelly rebel—I know it!" he said to himself; "and there is only one way to cure a woman like her of such a foolish infatuation. I'll kill the ruffian the instant I get within striking distance."

Onward the horseman rode at a gallop. He kept a sharp lookout ahead, but owing to the fact that the road twisted and turned, through the timber, he could not see very far at any time. The result was that he came upon a party of horsemen almost before he knew it.

There were at least one hundred of the horsemen, and they were not redcoats, for they did not wear the red uniforms—in fact, they wore no uniforms at all, being dressed in rough suits of citizens' clothing.

Major Morgan was a desperate and hot-headed man, and was the possessor of bulldog-like bravery and persistence. When in the pursuit of an object he was ready and willing to take all kinds of chances, and was not willing to have his mind diverted from the object. Now, it was so in this instance. He saw that the man he was looking for, Ernest Saunders, was among the members of the party, and as he had a quarrel to pick with Saunders, he gave no thought to the other men, who they might be or where they had come from.

He rode right up till in front of the horsemen, who were staring at the red-coated horseman in amazement, and brought his horse to a stop.

He gave a quick glance at the faces of the men confronting him, seemed to pick out the leader at a glance, and to him said: "I don't know who you and your men are, sir, and I don't care. I have a quarrel to settle with this

fellow, here, and all I ask is that you let us settle it without interfering in any way. Will you do it?"

The leader of the band of horsemen stared at the redcoat in surprise. Then he looked at Saunders, who also seemed surprised.

"What do you say, old man?" he asked.

"I say to grant the gentleman's request," was the prompt reply; "I have never met him before, that I know of, and do not know him from Adam, but I am quite willing to take his word for it that we have a quarrel to settle; in fact, if such were not the case I would be more than willing to quarrel with him. I am always ready to quarrel or to fight with any man I happen to run across wearing a uniform such as he has on."

The horsemen gave a cheer, and one cried: "Hurrah for Saunders!"

Major Morgan frowned fiercely. "Then it is settled?" he asked. "We will not be interfered with in any way?"

"You will not be interfered with in any way," was the quiet reply.

"Good!" Then the major turned his blazing eyes on Ernest Saunders.

"And you will fight me?" he cried.

"Why, certainly," was the prompt response, "I'll fight you. Anything to accommodate you. But what are we going to fight about? Is it anything special, or are we simply to fight because you wear a British uniform and I do not?"

"No, it isn't that. If that were the case I would as quickly have selected one of these men. No; I have a matter to settle with you."

"I suppose you do not mind telling me what it is?"

"You are the man who just fought a duel with a British captain, back down the road, are you not?"

Ernest Saunders nodded. "I'm the man," he said; "so that's why you wish to fight me, eh? You wish revenge for the defeat of your comrade."

"We will let it go at that, at any rate," was the reply with a cold smile.

"Well, if there is any other reason I would like to know what it is."

"Well, know, then: I told a certain lady that I would come after you and kill you!"

"Oh, that's it, eh?" remarked Saunders, his jaws coming together in a peculiar way. "And the lady, did she seem desirous that you should succeed?"

"She said I would find that I overestimated my prowess when I stated that I could beat you."

A peculiar look of delight, perhaps, appeared in the eyes

of the patriot. "Well," he said, slowly and deliberately, "I shall do my best to prove that the lady's judgment was correct."

"And I will quickly prove that it was not. How will you fight—with pistols or swords?"

"It doesn't matter to me."

"Then with swords it shall be."

"Swords it is!"

The men lost no time. They were both men who were not prone to waste time in fooling around, and when there was work to be done. They leaped to the ground, drew their swords, stepped out to where there was a level and open space, and the next instant were hard at it.

Clash! clash! clash! went the weapons.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEFEAT OF MAJOR MORGAN.

The party of men who were mostly young fellows of from nineteen to twenty-one years—and who were indeed the famous "Liberty Boys of '76," watched the combat with great interest. They knew and loved Ernest Saunders. He was a patriot partisan scout, who had worked with them on several occasions, and to whom, indeed, they were indebted for their lives, for on one occasion, when they had been surrounded and hemmed in by the redcoats he had showed them a way to escape and had led them safely out of the terrible danger which had threatened. Dick Slater, the leader of the "Liberty Boys," had at once told the brave scout that if ever the chance came when they should be in a position to do him a favor he might be certain that they would do it, even if they had to face death to do it. Saunders had laughed at the idea of their owing him anything in return for what he had done, but at the same time it was also evident that he was pleased to have been able to earn the friendship and good will of the brave "Liberty Boys."

Knowing him so well and loving him as only such true-hearted young fellows can love a comrade, the "Liberty Boys" were naturally anxious that Saunders should win in his fight with the British officer. For this reason they watched the combat with breathless interest.

There was a peculiar light shining in the handsome eyes of Dick Slater, and a grim expression on his face, and after watching the combat for a few moments he whispered to Bob Estabrook, who was Dick's right-hand man: "If that

redcoat succeeds in getting the better of Saunders I am going to force a fight upon him, Bob. He shall not leave here triumphant!"

"That's right, Dick," said Bob; "we'll avenge Saunders, if he fails, if it takes the entire force, one at a time, to do it."

"I think I can handle him," said Dick, quietly; "I have never yet met my equal among the redcoats, when it came to the using of the sword."

"You are right, old man."

"I think so; but I hope Ernest will be too much for the redcoat."

"So do I!"

For a few minutes it was impossible to make out which of the two men was the better swordsman. They seemed to be about equally expert in the use of the weapon.

This caused Dick and his comrades to have hopes that their friend would ultimately win, for they knew he was as tough as a pine knot. His muscles were like steel; his wind was perfect, and they did not remember to ever having seen him when he seemed to be very tired, even after the most strenuous and long-continued exertion. This made them feel that he would be able to tire the Briton out and defeat him.

Clash! clash! clash! the weapons went. The sparks flew from the highly tempered blades. The British officer made use of all the feints and thrusts of which he was master, and although these were not few in number, and some of them were quite scientific, his opponent was enabled to evade and parry all of them.

Major Morgan, as he realized that he had really met a foeman worthy of his steel, became very angry and tried to rush matters. This, of course, had the effect of tiring him much more rapidly than if he had been more careful, and had not attacked so fiercely. Of course, it made it more difficult for his opponent to protect himself, but Saunders was very strong, quick and skillful, and managed to keep out of harm's way in spite of all Major Morgan could do.

"Oh, stand up and fight like a man!" cried the major, who was red-faced and panting.

"You want me to stand up and fight like a man, do you?" remarked Saunders, cool and calm as could be.

"Yes."

"Very well; anything to please you, Sir Redcoat."

Then Saunders suddenly took the offensive. He knew that his opponent was tired, and as he himself was as fresh and strong as when they begun, he felt confident of his ability to speedily defeat his antagonist.

Saunders' attack was so fierce that in spite of all he could do the Briton was forced backward. He fought desperately, and an occasional muttered exclamation escaped his lips; but in spite of all his efforts he could not withstand the assault, and almost before he realized what had occurred, and indeed he did not fully know how it occurred, his sword was knocked out of his hand and he found himself facing his adversary, weaponless—helpless.

But the major was not a craven. He had plenty of physical, bulldog courage; he was not like Captain Fitzmorris, who, when he found himself hard pressed, threw down his sword and fled. Instead, even when he was weaponless and defenseless, the major stood there, erect and defiant.

"Strike!" he cried, fiercely. "Strike and end it!"

But Saunders shook his head and lowered his sword.

"I could not think of doing such a thing," he said.

"But it is your right; you have won. You have a right to cut me down. I should have done so with you."

"That may be the way you redcoats do business," was the calm, cold reply; "but we patriots do not do it that way. We would consider ourselves but little better than murderers if we were to strike a weaponless man."

"But it was a duel to the death, and you disarmed me; now you have the right to reap the fruits of your exertions."

"I could not think of doing it," was the quiet reply; "I shall, however, keep the sword, as in that way I shall be able to prove to the young lady in question that her judgment of me was right."

"I would rather that you kill me!" cried the major.

"Oh, you will think differently as soon as you get cooled off a bit, sir; to-morrow you will be very glad that I did not kill you."

"Very well; but I want you to distinctly understand one thing, Mr. Ernest Saunders."

"What is that?"

"That I shall consider myself under no obligations to you for sparing my life."

"I do not wish you to so consider yourself."

"I told you to take my life, and you refused to do so; that absolves me from any obligations, and I warn you that this will not end the affair."

"Just as you will," was the careless reply; "I could not bring myself to strike an unarmed man, even if I knew he would be after me the next hour, trying to kill me."

The "Liberty Boys" clapped their hands in approval of this sentiment. They were as honorable as they were brave, and they could not approve of murder committed in the name of war, or in the guise of a duel.

"Very well," said Major Morgan; "you will know what to expect. I am your deadly enemy, and either you or I must die, and that soon!"

"I don't see any need for any such thing happening," said Saunders, quietly; "the world is pretty big, and there should be room in it for both of us."

"But there isn't! One or the other of us must die!"

"But why?"

"You know very well."

Saunders shook his head.

"You are mistaken; I do not know why."

"Yes, you do."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I do not."

"Do you mean to deny that you have turned the head of Colonel Chandler's daughter—that you have caused her to take a fancy to you, a rebel?"

Saunders started. "I do mean to say that I deny having caused it," he said, slowly; "if the young lady you mention has taken a liking to me she has done it of her own accord, for I have done nothing to attempt to bring such a thing about. I have my doubts regarding the matter, major."

The redcoat shook his head. "It is patent to any one who hears her talk of you," he said, stubbornly; "and as I have made up my mind to make Miss Chandler Mrs. Morgan, there can be only one settlement of the question—you or I must die!"

"I can't help thinking you are very much mistaken, Major Morgan," said Saunders; "I never in my life laid eyes on Miss Chandler until an hour ago, and it seems to me the height of folly for you to assert that she cares aught for me."

The major shook his head and frowned. "Women are queer beings," he said; "especially when they are about the age of Miss Chandler. They are as likely to fall in love with a man at first sight as not, and while I do not say she is in love, yet she may become infatuated if you are where she can hear of you, and perchance see you once in a while. If you will give me your word, however, that you will keep away from her, I will agree to call this matter off between us."

Saunders smiled in scorn. "You mistake your man," he said; "I will agree to nothing. While I do not think the young lady in question cares anything for me, or ever will, yet if it should so happen that such proved to be the case and I wished to meet her and cultivate her acquaintance, I would do so even if a hundred British officers were threatening my life!"

Again the "Liberty Boys" clapped their hands in approval of this statement. They were young men, and many

of them had sweethearts at home, and they were in sympathy with such an utterance as the one made by Saunders.

Major Morgan frowned. "Very well; have it that way if you like," he said; "then it is understood that we are deadly enemies, and that one or the other must die!"

"I don't understand it that way, major; but if you attack me I shall be ready for you, and you may be sure that I shall not yield up my life if I can help it."

"That is to be expected, of course. Well, I will go—and the next time we meet, beware!"

"I shall look out for you, major."

The British officer mounted his horse, turned its head and galloped back down the road in the direction from which he had come only a short time before. He was in a different state of mind from what he had been in, then, however. He had come, feeling arrogant and important, intending to kill the man who had defeated and humbled Captain Fitzmorris, and now he was returning defeated and humbled himself.

The major was terribly cast down and was filled with disgust on account of the failure of his mission. To be defeated and disarmed by a "rebel," and a seeming peasant at that, was terribly galling.

He rode slowly, for he did not wish to overtake his men before they reached Savannah. He did not wish to be forced to see Jennie Chandler and acknowledge his defeat at the hands of the "rebel."

His scheme to ride slowly and let his men reach Savannah ahead of him failed, however, for when he had gone a couple of miles he suddenly came upon the party, on turning a bend in the road.

They had halted, at the suggestion from the girl, to wait the coming of the major, and he was so close upon them when he caught sight of them that he could not get back out of sight and was forced to come on and join them.

"Well, major, what luck?" asked Jennie, although she, being a shrewd reader of faces, knew in an instant that he had not been successful.

Captain Fitzmorris and the dragoons looked at the major eagerly. They were not such good readers of faces, and waited for the officer's reply to the question with interest and anxiety.

"Beastly luck!" the major growled.

"Ah, you were defeated, then?" the girl exclaimed, a smile coming over her face.

"I was beaten by a trick," the major growled. He thought he would lighten the discredit to himself by saying that he had been beaten by a trick.

"By a trick?" Jennie said. "How was that?"

"Oh, he fooled me by some of his apparently awkward work, and I grew careless," was the reply; "I had him at my mercy, but thought I would play with him a bit, as a cat does with a mouse, and it was my undoing. He managed to catch me unawares and knock my sword out of my hand. He did not beat me, however; I beat myself."

The girl was not to be deceived so easily, however. She was watching the major closely and was sure that he was not telling the truth.

"Come, come, major," she said; "be fair and give the man credit for what he did. He undoubtedly defeated you fairly."

"Oh, yes, he defeated me fairly," acknowledged the major, flushing; "I don't say he did not, for all is fair in love or war, but I do say that he did it by a trick, and could not do it again."

"How happens it that you were not injured in any way, major?" the girl asked. "I supposed that when you came together it would be a combat to the death."

"That is what I intended, but he would not take advantage of his opportunity—the more fool, he—and refused to cut me down, although he could have done so."

A peculiar light shone in the eyes of Jennie Chandler. It would be hard to analyze it, but had Ernest Saunders been where he could have seen it, and known what caused it, he would not have been displeased.

"That is what I call an honorable and magnanimous act," said the girl. "It proves not that Ernest Saunders is a fool, but that he is a brave and true man."

"Oh, I knew you would look at it in that light," half sneered Major Morgan.

"Surely you do not cherish ill will against him yet?" said Jennie. "After what he has done in sparing your life, I should think that you would think well of him."

"I told him that I would not consider myself under any obligations to him for sparing my life, and that we were deadly enemies and that the next time we met, one or the other of us would have to die!" was the vicious reply. "And I meant it! The world is not big enough to hold both of us!"

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT A BRAVE GIRL DID.

"What is all this I hear, Jennie?" said Colonel Chandler, that evening, as he and his daughter were taking supper in their quarters in Savannah.

"I'm sure I don't know what you have heard, father," with a smile.

The colonel, who while haughty and austere to outsiders, and a strict disciplinarian, was kindness and gentleness personified to his daughter, laughed and said:

"I have reference to the stories which Captain Fitzmorris and Major Morgan have been telling, regarding their encounters with a rebel, one Ernest Saunders, I believe they say his name is."

"What have they been saying about this—about the rebel, father?"

"They say he is a terrible fellow, a genuine desperado, and that he should be hunted down and killed."

"So that is what they say, is it?"

"Yes; they seem to be very bitter against him."

"I suppose that is natural, as he defeated them in duels."

"True; but they don't lay so much stress on that. Their claim is that he is a very dangerous man, and that he is working up the rebels of the vicinity and inciting them to join the enemy and fight against us."

"I don't know anything about that, father. I never saw this man before and know nothing about him."

"That reminds me of what Captain Fitzmorris said," remarked the colonel; "he made me half angry, and I was at the same time amused."

"What did he say, father?"

"That this rebel, Saunders, tried to make an impression on you—ha! ha! ha! Did you hear of such foolishness?"

"I never did, father. Why, the gentleman was only so polite to me as a gentleman might be expected to be to any lady."

"So I knew; but the captain insisted that he put himself out to try to attract your attention and make an impression on you."

"The captain is silly, father; and such a statement is ridiculous."

"So I knew. Well, I think that the fellow will not be allowed to run at large much longer, for I have given Major Morgan permission to scour the surrounding country for him, and capture or kill him."

Had the colonel been watching his daughter closely he might have seen a change of color, for she suddenly grew pale. She soon recovered from her temporary paleness, however, and managed to speak calmly and apparently unconcernedly.

"So the major is going to try to hunt this man Saunders down, is he?" she asked.

"Yes."

"I suppose he will take a force of men with him?"

"Yes, he will take about twenty men."

"When is he going to start on the search for the rebel?"

"In the morning."

"In the morning?"

"Yes. He thinks it best not to attempt anything at night, as the rebel is much more familiar with the country than any of our men can possibly be, and it is likely that the fellow may be found in the day time, as he is known to do most of his work at night, and then do his sleeping in the daytime."

"I think it quite likely that this is the case, father," the girl said; and even while speaking a plan was rapidly maturing in her mind, a plan by which she thought it possible she might warn Ernest Saunders of his danger.

Jennie did not have much more to say during the time spent in eating supper. She was thinking, maturing her plan. She had made up her mind to warn the patriot of his danger; that much was settled. She did not stop to ask herself why she was going to do this. It did not matter why. It was enough that she wished to do it.

Her father did not notice the pre-occupied manner of his daughter. He was busy with his own thoughts, wondering if Major Morgan would be successful in capturing the "rebel," so did not pay much attention to Jennie.

The colonel's daughter had enough of her father in her make-up to make her very determined, and she lost no time in putting her plan into operation, once it was decided upon. When supper was over she went to her room and donned her riding costume, much to the surprise of Sarah, her colored maid.

"Is young missus goin' fur er ride ter-night?" the girl asked.

"Yes, Sarah; and I wish you to keep the matter quiet, you understand?"

"I s'pose so, missus. Yo' doan wan' me ter say nothin' ter nobuddy erbout yo' goin', is dat it?"

"Yes, Sarah."

"Not even ter Master Cunnel?"

"No, not even to him; and, Sarah, if you will do as I ask you, you shall have that gold breastpin of mine that you think is so pretty."

"Foah de goodness' sake libe, Miss Jinnie, yo' is de best-est missus in all de hull worl'!" the colored girl cried, her eyes rolling in ecstasy.

"Here is the pin, Sarah; it is yours."

"T'ank yo', missus—t'ank yo'!"

"And, Sarah, I wish you would go to the stable and tell Sam to saddle and bridle Knight, and have him ready for me."

"I'll do it, missus. Shall I go right erway?"

"Yes, Sarah; and—tell Sam to keep the matter quiet, will you?"

"Yes, indeed, missus; Sam won' say er word ef I tell 'im not ter."

As Sam was Sarah's sweetheart, Jennie was sure that the girl spoke the truth.

"Very well; you see, father would not let me go out alone if he knew of it, for he would be afraid I would be captured by the rebels; but this is such nice weather, and we have such a beautiful moon, that I am eager to take at least one moonlight ride, and enjoy myself. I hate to have to be escorted by a stiff officer in uniform, and be forced to ride along at a sedate pace. I want one good, invigorating ride, one wild dash in freedom, through the country."

"All right, missus; Sam'n me won' tell nobuddy, yo' kin be shore ub dat."

"That's right, Sarah; now go and tell Sam."

"I'll go right erway, missus."

The girl took her departure, and was gone fifteen or twenty minutes. "Sorry I wuz so long, missus," said Sarah, giggling; "but dat fool nigger wouldn' lemme go till I gib 'im er kiss, an' so I hed ter let 'im, arter he'd done kep' me dere fur er spell."

"That's all right, Sarah. I don't wish to start until it is quite dark, anyway."

"Dat's whut I t'ought, missus."

"And Sam will have the horse ready for me?"

"Oh, yes, missus."

"Very well."

Jennie waited till it was quite dark, and then again cautioning Sarah, she stole downstairs and out at the back door. She made her way to the stable and found that Sam had Knight saddled and bridled.

"Now, Sam, don't tell any one that I have gone for a ride," said the girl.

"I won't, Miss Jennie," was the reply.

"Very well; I will be back in two or three hours. I want to take a nice ride."

"Doan' let de rebels git yo', missus," said the darky.

"I am not afraid of them, Sam."

Then the girl mounted and rode slowly away. She made her way through the city at a moderate pace, for she kept to unfrequented streets, where there were few street lamps, and could not see to go rapidly. She was in no hurry, however, as she had plenty of time.

Jennie knew all the streets leading out into the country, and was aware of the points where sentinels were sta-

tioned. She knew of three streets that were not guarded, as they were small affairs and led to nowhere in particular, but once out in the country she could easily gain the main highway.

She decided upon which one of the three streets she should choose as an exit, and made her way in that direction. She rode slowly and cautiously until she was clear of the city, and then she made a half circuit and struck the main road leading westward. Once on it she let her horse out and rode at a gallop.

It had been dark, but now the moon was just rising above the tops of the trees and its bright light would soon make it almost as light as day. Jennie was happy; she felt like singing, but did not dare do so for fear she might be heard. She could not think what it was that made her feel so light-hearted and happy; but finally came to the conclusion that it was because she was riding alone, was free from the escort of an officer whose presence was hateful to her.

This was not what was making her so light-hearted and happy, however; although she did not at the time realize it, it was because she was en route for the home of Ernest Saunders, and because she thought it likely that she would see the handsome patriot there.

Onward she rode, at a gallop, for an hour or more and then she slackened the speed of Knight and commenced to keep a sharp lookout for the path which led to the patriot's home in the timber.

At last she came to the path, and with a pleased exclamation she turned the horse's head in the direction of the path and entering it rode onward at a walk.

Fifteen minutes of this and then she came to a little opening in the timber, and in the centre of the opening was a log cabin. There was a light shining through the one window of the cabin, and this made the girl feel better, for it indicated that the inmate or inmates of the house were up, that they had not retired.

When within a few yards of the front door Jennie brought the horse to a stop and leaped to the ground. Tying the animal to a tree which stood near the girl advanced to the door and knocked.

There was no response from within, and again the girl knocked.

This time there was a response; a voice—evidently that of a woman—answered and said:

"Who is there?"

"Open the door," replied Jennie; "I am a woman and am alone."

The girl heard an exclamation in a masculine voice, this

being followed by hasty footsteps, and then the door was unbarred and opened, and Ernest Saunders stood in the open doorway, staring eagerly out at the girl standing there.

"Miss Chandler!" he exclaimed. "I recognized your voice the instant you spoke. Come in; come in! Mother, this is Miss Chandler, of whom I have just been telling you. Miss Chandler, my mother."

Jennie had entered the cabin while Ernest was speaking, and she stepped forward and gave the woman her hand. Mrs. Saunders was seemingly about fifty-five years old and was a well-preserved and rather good-looking woman for one of her years; she eyed Jennie closely without seeming to do so, and was evidently pleased with the girl's appearance, for her manner was very friendly toward the maiden, and she led her to a chair and insisted on her removing her riding-hat.

Meanwhile Ernest had closed the door and barred it, and he now advanced and stood facing the girl, looking at her inquiringly yet with the light of a great admiration—and something more—shining out of his eyes.

Jennie saw the look and blushed. To hide her embarrassment she turned and spoke to Mrs. Saunders, saying something about the weather and how beautiful the night was.

"What in the world has brought you out here in the night, Miss Chandler?" asked Ernest.

The girl turned her eyes on the patriot's face, but almost instantly dropped them.

"I came to warn you," she replied.

A look of surprise and delight commingled appeared on the young man's face, while one of fear appeared on the face of his mother.

"To warn me?" Ernest said. "Of what?"

"Of danger which threatens you."

"From what source?"

"From the British."

"Ah! And you have come here to warn me, a 'rebel,' of danger?"

"Yes."

The girl's voice was low and almost tremulous.

"But why should you do that, Miss Chandler?"

"Because—I—it seemed to me so—so—unfair to permit you to be taken unawares, as—they—are intending to take you. I thought it my duty to come and warn you."

"But I am an enemy of the British, Miss Chandler; an enemy of your friends—of your father. Did you think of that?"

The girl's face was red with blushes and she turned an almost appealing look upon Mrs. Saunders.

"Yes, I thought of that," was the low reply, "but—I—could not remain in Savannah and let you be—be—taken at a disadvantage, so I—I—came to—warn you."

Mrs. Saunders stepped to the girl's side and placed her arm around Jennie's neck. She brushed the hair back from the white forehead and, stooping, imprinted a kiss there. "Bless you, child!" she whispered, and a pleased look appeared on the girl's face and she looked smilingly up at Ernest, who was looking at this by-play with wondering eyes. Man-like, he did not understand it; but the woman and the girl did.

"Well, I must say that I appreciate what you have done, Miss Chandler," said Ernest, earnestly; "you have taken a great deal of trouble on my account, and I thank you."

"You are welcome," was the reply, in a low, almost tremulous voice.

"But now, in what shape will this danger manifest itself, Miss Jennie?" asked Ernest.

"A party of the British is coming in the morning," was the reply, "and they are going to hunt you down and kill or capture you."

"So that is it, eh?"

"Yes; and Major Morgan will have command of the party."

"I should have guessed that such would be the case."

"Yes; he is very bitter against you for overcoming him in the duel this afternoon."

"He told me as much this afternoon."

"Yes, he says that one or the other of you must die."

"I do not doubt it."

"You will have to be very careful, sir, for the major is a dangerous man."

"Yes, I think myself that he is a dangerous man. I do not underestimate him as a foe; but I think that I shall be able to hold my own against him."

"I hope so; but so long as he is searching for you with a score of men it will be best and safest for you to keep out of his way."

"Yes, that will be my best plan so long as I am alone; but I have friends in this part of the country, now, and think I shall be able to give this Major Morgan and his men a surprise."

"You have friends, you say?" the girl exclaimed, eagerly.

"Yes."

"Are there many of them?"

"A hundred, Miss Jennie."

"Oh, I am so glad! But where are they now?"

"They had some business to attend to and are away,

but will be back soon. They are likely to come at almost any time."

"I am glad of that!" There was no doubting the girl's sincerity, and Ernest looked at her curiously. Could it be possible that she cared for him? Ernest asked himself. The thought that such might be the case gave the young man a delicious feeling of happiness; it almost took his breath, in truth, and the rich, red blood rushed to his face as he saw the girl looking at him earnestly, and he realized what the thoughts were that were in his mind.

And when Jennie saw the flush which came over the young man's face a feeling of happiness came over her and a look of delight shone in her eyes.

"I believe he loves me!" she said to herself. "Oh, I hope so, I hope so! for—I love him! I know it now! I love him dearly!"

The girl remained at the cabin half an hour longer, talking, and then said she must be going.

"Wait a few minutes," said Ernest; "I will go and get my horse and will escort you back to the city."

"Oh, there is no necessity of your doing so," was the reply, though it was plain from the tone that the idea was not displeasing. "I had no trouble in reaching here, and will doubtless have none in getting back."

"I know, but you will feel safer to have an escort," said the young man. "It will take me but a few minutes to bridle and saddle my horse."

"Very well; I will wait," said Jennie, and Ernest hastened out of the cabin.

He was gone only a few minutes, and then he re-entered and said: "Now I am ready, Miss Jennie."

"Very well; I am ready, too," was the reply. Then the girl kissed Mrs. Saunders and bade her good-by, and turning to Ernest, said: "Now we will go."

"You must come again, Miss Jennie," said Ernest's mother, and the girl gave the woman a smile and a nod.

"Yes, I'll come again—and again and again," she said. "I like it here and will come and spend a day with you, very once in a while."

"Do, Miss Chandler!" said Ernest, enthusiastically. "Mother will be so pleased to have you do so—and so will I!"

"Will you?" with an arch look.

There was something in the girl's eyes and expression and in the tone of her voice, that was a revelation to Ernest. "She loves me!" he said to himself, and the knowledge almost made him dizzy. "It does not seem possible that this beautiful girl, the daughter of an officer in the service of the king whom I detest and am fighting against

should love me, but I am confident that such is the case, and I am going to know the truth this very night. I'll have it from her own lips or the denial that such is the case."

So busy was the young man with his thoughts that he did not answer the girl's question. She did not seem to be put out, however, for with a woman's instinct she seemed to divine what was passing in Ernest's mind.

Mrs. Saunders stood in the open doorway and waited till the two had mounted, and then she called out good-by to Jennie, and entered the cabin and closed the door.

The two rode across the open space and entered the path, Ernest being in the lead, the path being only wide enough for one horse. They rode along for twenty minutes, exchanging scarcely a word; but both were busy with their thoughts.

When they came to the point where the path joined the main road, however, Ernest brought his horse to a stop, and as Jennie rode up alongside him he said: "Miss Chandler—Jennie, I have something which I wish to say to you, and I am going to ask you to dismount, as we will be more comfortable standing than sitting on horseback. Will you grant me this favor?"

"Why, certainly, Ernest—Mr. Saunders," was the reply, and there was a tremor in the girl's voice.

In an instant Ernest was on the ground and reaching up his hands to assist the girl to alight. She leaped down, and was steadied by Ernest, who, leaving the horses to graze on the grass growing by the roadside, held to Jennie's hand and said, rapidly, passionately:

"Miss Chandler—Jennie, do not think me bold, but I must tell you, I cannot help telling you, now and here, that I love you. I would not have had courage to tell you had you not made me think that perhaps you cared something for me by coming to warn me of the danger which threatened me." Jennie was silent, and thinking that perhaps he had made a mistake, after all, Ernest went on: "Forgive me if I have made a mistake, Jennie—Miss Chandler. If I am mistaken, and you do not love me, say so, and I will beg your pardon for my presumption and we will go on our way to Savannah. Speak to me, anyway, Jennie—Miss Chandler; tell me that you love me or that you do not!"

The next instant Jennie whispered: "I love you, Ernest!" and with an exclamation of delight the young man seized the girl and kissed her again and again.

"And you will be my wife, little sweetheart?" whispered the young man.

"Yes, Ernest."

"But your father? He is a British officer, and will object to your having a 'rebel' for a husband, will he not?"

"He won't like it," was the reply; "but I will marry you, anyway, Ernest, even if I have to run away, for I love you so dearly that I could not think of letting my father's objections keep us apart."

"Bless you, little sweetheart!"

At this instant there came an interruption. A dozen dark forms emerged from the edge of the timber at the farther side of the road and came rushing across and were upon the lovers before they knew what was happening.

"It is that scoundrelly rebel, Saunders!" cried a fierce voice which the two recognized as belonging to Major Morgan. "Kill him! He must not be allowed to make his escape!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE PURSUIT.

Although taken by surprise, Ernest Saunders was not the man to give up without a struggle. He saw that he was outnumbered a dozen to one, but that made no difference. He would put up a good fight for his life, just the same. He realized that it would be death, anyway, if he surrendered, for Major Morgan had sworn to kill him on sight, so there was only one thing for a brave man to do—fight to the death; and Ernest Saunders was a brave man.

Quickly disengaging himself from the embrace of his sweetheart, she having seized him in convulsive fright at sound of the voice, Ernest said, hurriedly, even while drawing his sword: "Get back out of harm's way, sweetheart, and I will show those fellows that they will not have things all their own way!"

"Oh, fly for your life, Ernest!" the girl cried. But there was no chance to do this, for the young patriot was surrounded. He had drawn a pistol with his left hand, while drawing his sword with the right, and he fired the instant he got the weapon cocked; and so true was his aim that one of the redcoats went down.

Then the others were upon him, and he was fighting fiercely against overwhelming odds. The patriot was a stalwart and powerful fellow, however, and he made use of tactics that for a few moments held the enemy at bay, even though they outnumbered him a dozen at least, and were all around him. He kept whirling around and around, and striking out fiercely and rapidly with the sword. He

wounded three of the redcoats and knocked the swords out of the hands of several, but, of course, one man could not defeat a dozen, no matter how much prowess he might be possessed of; there was a diversion in his favor, for a few moments, however.

It was caused by Jennie, who suddenly thought of her double-barreled pistol, and drawing it she fired two shots managing to bring down two of the men who were trying to kill her lover.

"You she-fiend!" hissed Major Morgan. "I will make you suffer for that! You are a traitress and you shall suffer the fate of a traitress! I will attend to your case when we have rid the earth of this scoundrel!"

Then the redcoats turned their attention wholly to Ernest Saunders, and attacked him so fiercely that he was soon at a desperate pass. He could not keep so many at bay, and presently one of the men succeeded in running him through, the sword passing clear through the brave patriot's body, at a point well up in the chest on the right-hand side.

It was a serious wound, and with a gasping groan the brave fellow sank to the ground, apparently dead. A wild scream of anguish went up from the lips of Jennie Chandler when she saw her lover go down, apparently a corpse, and the scream was answered by a ringing cheer. The galloping of horses could be heard, too, and it was evident that a party of horsemen was coming—was close at hand.

"I fear it is an enemy!" cried Major Morgan. "Fly for your lives, boys! I will join you in Savannah. I have some work to attend to, first!" and as he spoke, and the men fled across the road, the major leaped forward and seized Jennie Chandler, who was kneeling beside the still form of her lover and was calling upon him wildly to speak to her. Lifting the girl bodily, the major, who was a strong man, ran across the road and disappeared in the timber—but not before he had been seen by the newcomers who were no other than the "Liberty Boys."

"There has been some bad work going on here, boys," cried Dick. "Ah, here is some one, dead or seriously wounded! Let's see who it is."

He reined up his horse, and, leaping to the ground, hastened to where the wounded patriot lay.

"It's Ernest Saunders!" he cried; then he knelt beside the unconscious patriot and made a quick examination of the wound, which was bleeding copiously.

"A serious wound," he murmured; "but I do not think it is necessarily fatal. I'll see if I can bring him to. Then he called to Bob Estabrook and asked for the flask of liquor which was always carried for use in cases of the

kind. Placing the mouth of the flask to Saunders' lips Dick permitted some of the fluid to flow into the injured man's mouth. A few moments and then with a gasp Saunders came to. He looked up at Dick's face in wonder, and then as the remembrance of it all came back to him a cry escaped him.

"Where are they?" he cried, faintly. "Where is Jennie?"

"Easy, Ernest," said Dick, soothingly; "tell us all about it, but don't excite yourself; you are wounded, you know."

"Ah, yes, so I am," and a groan, not of pain but of anguish, caused by the knowledge that he was helpless to render assistance to Jennie if she was in need of it, left his lips.

"Jennie—where is she?" he asked, faintly but eagerly.

"I saw a man run across the road a few minutes ago, carrying a woman in his arms, Ernest," said Dick, gently; "perhaps that was she."

"Yes, yes; that was she! That was Jennie Chandler, my sweetheart and promised wife, Dick. And the scoundrel who was carrying her was Major Morgan, and I doubt not he will carry her away somewhere and hold her a prisoner and try to force her to agree to become his wife. Oh, this is terrible, that I am lying here, helpless, and my loved one in the hands of that scoundrel!"

"Calm yourself, Ernest," said Dick, earnestly; "don't worry; for I give you my word of honor that your sweetheart shall be rescued from the hands of the redcoat. I will take a lot of the boys and go on his trail at once, and we will run him down, as sure as my name is Dick Slater!"

"You will do this for me, Dick?" The wounded man's voice was weak but eager.

"I will, Ernest. I promise you, on my honor, and I will keep the promise or die trying."

"God bless you, Dick! You make me almost happy, for I know that if the scoundrel can be found, you will find him."

"Yes, we will never leave his trail until after we have run him to earth, Ernest; and now I will leave you to be looked after by some of the boys, who will carry you to your home and dress your wound. You are seriously wounded, old man, and will need to keep quiet and take things easy; but you are not fatally wounded by any means. You will live to be happy with Jennie. Bear that in mind and rest easy; for when I come back your sweetheart will be with me."

"Thank you, Dick. I will rest easy, for I know that you can do as well as I could do, if able to go after that scoundrel, myself."

"He cannot escape us, Ernest; unless he goes back to

Savannah, and if he does that Miss Chandler will be safe from him."

"True."

Dick gave a few instructions, and then selecting twenty of the "Liberty Boys" set out in the direction taken by the British officer with his prisoner, for Dick knew the girl was a captive in the hands of a villain.

As soon as they were on the opposite side of the road, and had entered the timber, Dick directed the youths to spread out, fan shape, and continue going in the direction they were headed in until they found the British officer and the girl, or until summoned by two pistol shots, which was to be the signal that the quarry had been run to earth, no matter who found them.

The British officer had perhaps ten minutes start, but as he was burdened with the girl it was probable that he had not been able to go very far in that time, and Dick was confident that they would be able to speedily run him to earth.

The "Liberty Boys," in keeping in the directions in which they had started, gradually drew away from each other, and when they had gone a mile were scattered out quite a distance. No sign was found of the British officer and the girl, and the youths kept on at as rapid a pace as it was possible for them to keep up, through the timber.

Another mile was traversed and the youths were more than a quarter of a mile apart. Indeed, they could not hear anything of one another. They kept on, however, and kept a sharp lookout for the redcoat.

It so happened that Dick was to be the lucky one to find the fugitive. He suddenly emerged into an opening in the timber, and through this opening ran a stream. It was not a wide stream, nor a deep one, nor was there any bank to speak of on the side next to Dick; but on the opposite side there was a bank three or four feet high, and a little ways back from the edge of the bank was a large stone. Leaning against the stone, plainly to be seen in the moonlight, were the British officer and the girl. The redcoat had paused to rest. The girl's arms were bound with a piece of rope—doubtless off a rope halter that had been worn by the horse the major had ridden from Savannah, but had been forced to abandon when he made off with the girl.

The youth did not hesitate, but bounded forward and was almost to the bank of the stream when the British officer saw him. The girl saw Dick at the same instant, and as the major attempted to draw a pistol she lurched against him with all her might, and in order to save himself from falling the redcoat was forced to leap out into

the stream. He struck near the middle and caused the water to splash up greatly.

This was Dick opportunity, and he took advantage of it. He did not wish to shoot the redcoat down in cold blood, and so, feeling himself capable of overcoming the officer in a hand-to-hand combat, the "Liberty Boy" leaped into the stream and grappled with the man.

With a curse of rage the redcoat grappled Dick. "I will quickly make an end of you, you dog!" he hissed, and he went to work to try to make his words good.

He had found a foeman more than worthy of his best efforts, however, and he soon realized this, but he fought desperately, in the hope that he might succeed in overpowering the youth.

It was a terrible struggle, there in the water, between the British officer and the "Liberty Boy," and the fair prisoner watched the struggle with starting eyes and prayed for the success of the patriot youth.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAJOR'S FATE.

We will now explain how it happened that Major Morgan and his men had happened to be at the spot when Ernest Saunders and Jennie Chandler had been coming to an understanding.

The major had walked around to the house occupied by Colonel Chandler, with the intention of having an interview with the officer and ask his permission to pay address to his daughter; it was just after dark, and it so happened that he got there just as Jennie rode out of the little alley leading from the stable at the rear of the house to the street. The major could not see very plainly, but he seemed to know at once that the rider was the colonel's daughter.

"Where can she be going, I wonder?" he asked himself.

"It is very strange."

His first impulse was to hasten forward and accost the girl, and then he dismissed the thought and decided to learn where she was going, if possible. Somehow a suspicion had entered his mind—a suspicion that the colonel's daughter was going out to meet some one. Who that some one might be was to the major's mind quite patent.

"She is going out to meet that scoundrelly rebel, Saunders!" he said to himself. "I would be willing to wager a hundred pounds that such is the case!" Then a thought struck him that he might be able to find out from Sam,

the stableman. So the major hastened around there, and although Sam tried to evade the questions which the officer put to him, he had to admit that his young mistress was gone and that she had said she was going out for a moonlight ride.

"That settles it!" thought the major, his heart almost bursting with rage. "She has gone out to keep an appointment with that rebel. Well, I will get some of the boys and we will follow her, and if we get the chance—and I think we shall—we will make one rebel the less in this part of the country before morning."

So the major had hastened to his quarters, had called to a dozen of his men to mount and follow him, and had leaped into the saddle and set out in the direction which he guessed the girl had taken.

He was right in his estimation of the direction taken, but Jennie had secured such a start that the pursuers did not catch sight of her before she reached the path which branched off from the main road and led to the cabin in the timber, the home of Ernest Saunders.

On account of this the major and his men had gone too far toward the west, and when at last it was decided that the girl had not come so far, they turned and rode back in the direction of Savannah.

Ernest Saunders and Jennie Chandler were standing back in the shadows of the trees, out of sight, as the major and his men approached from the west, but the two horses, in moving about, cropping the grass, had moved out far enough into the road so that they were seen while the party was two hundred yards distant.

The major at once jumped to the conclusion that their search was at an end, that they had found the girl and her lover, and he ordered his men to dismount and tie their horses, which they did. Then he led the way and the redcoats crept along, down the road, keeping just out of sight in the edge of the timber, but on the opposite side of the road from the one the girl and her lover were supposed to be on.

When the redcoats were nearly opposite the two horses the major suddenly caught sight of Ernest Saunders and Jennie Chandler, and while the two were well back in the shadows he was able to make out that the girl was in the man's arms. The sight rendered the British officer wild with rage, and he at once gave the order to charge and uttered the words given at the close of the preceding chapter: "It is that scoundrelly rebel, Saunders! Kill him! He must not be allowed to make his escape!"

The rest we know—how Ernest Saunders was attacked, and after a fierce fight was laid low, apparently dead; how

horsesmen were heard approaching, and the major and his men took refuge in flight, the officer carrying the girl with him, a prisoner; and how Dick Slater and a dozen of his "Liberty Boys" went in pursuit of the major, and how, ultimately, Dick ran the officer down at the stream and became engaged in a hand-to-hand combat with him in the middle of the stream, watched by the fair prisoner, who hoped and prayed for the patriot youth's success.

The struggle went on fiercely. The major was a strong man and prided himself on his strength. He had felt a thrill of pleasure as he felt the youth in his grasp, and said to himself that he would make short work of the fellow.

But he did not know with whom he was dealing. Dick Slater was perfectly at home in a contest of this kind. He had been engaged in many during the three years he had been serving in the patriot army as scout, spy and captain of the "Liberty Boys," and never yet had he met his match.

He did not think he would find his match, this time, but he soon realized that he had a foeman worthy of his best efforts, and did not throw any chances away.

"I'll kill you, you young scoundrel!" snarled the major, viciously.

"Perhaps," was the sententious reply.

"There is no 'perhaps' about it; you are as good as dead already!"

"And buried, why didn't you say?" remarked Dick, sarcastically. "Don't be so modest. Say it all while you are about it."

A curse escaped the major's lips. He had thought that he might frighten his opponent and thus gain an advantage, but the other's coolness showed him that he could not succeed in this.

"Don't swear or you won't catch any fish, major," said Dick, calmly; and again an oath escaped the major's lips.

"You think you are smart, don't you?" he hissed.

"Oh, no!" coolly.

"Well, before I get through with you you will have gotten over the idea that you are smart."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Oh, very well; if you say so, that settles it, I suppose."

"I am going to drown you, you rebel dog!"

"I'll wager you anything you like that you don't do anything of the kind, you British hound!"

A hoarse roar of rage issued from the lips of the officer. He was a man who had a great deal of pride in rank and pomp, and nothing could cut him so much as to be

addressed in such a manner by one whom he looked upon with scorn, as being plebeian, as being a "nobody."

He began a fiercer attack than ever and exerted himself to such an extent that it kept Dick pretty busy for a few minutes. It had the effect of tiring the officer out, however, and he was soon puffing at a great rate.

"You see, you are tiring yourself out," said Dick, calmly; "you know what that means—that I shall have you at my mercy in a very few moments."

Major Morgan realized this only too well, and he made up his mind to make one desperate attempt to end the matter. In his belt was a long-bladed, sharp knife that he had had made to order in England. The major was a great gambler, and he had found this weapon handy for use at the card-table, after a quarrel, as he could draw it quickly and strike his adversary before the other could draw a sword. Now he reasoned that if he could draw the knife he would be able to make short work of his opponent; and he began figuring to do this.

He managed to get his right hand in such a position that he could let go quickly with it, draw the knife and use it, and when all was ready he put his plan into execution.

He let go of Dick, drew the knife, quickly, and made a fierce stroke at his opponent; but Dick was on his guard. The instant the other let go his hold with the right hand the youth knew the major was up to some trick, and when he saw the knife he realized what the trick was. He was not willing that it should succeed, however, and he caught the major by the wrist and by an exertion of all his wonderful strength of arm he twisted the man's wrist in such a manner that the blade of the knife, instead of reaching him as intended by the owner, was sheathed instead in the major's breast.

With a gasping cry the officer staggered and would have fallen, but Dick half carried, half dragged him to the bank, and eased him to the ground.

It was evident that he would not live a minute. The knife had penetrated to the heart, and the major was doomed. He realized it, but the realization did not seem to take any of the venom out of him. He turned his eyes on Jennie, who was staring at him with eyes of horror, and said, with fiendish joy in the tones:

"I die, but—your lover—Saunders—he is—dead, too! He will—not be—your—husband!"

"You are mistaken, major," said Dick, quietly; "Ernest Saunders is severely wounded, but he will not die."

"What!" almost shrieked Major Morgan, trying to rise, and falling back, weak and dying. "He—will—not—die—you say? You—are—speaking—falsely!"

"No, I am telling you only the truth," was the calm reply. "Ernest Saunders will live."

"Thank God!" cried Jennie Chandler, a look of joy on her face.

"Curse—the—luck!" These were the last words of Major Morgan, and as the last word left his lips he gave a convulsive gasp and all was over.

"Is—he—dead?" almost gasped Jennie, as she stared in horror at the still form.

"Yes," replied Dick, soberly; "he will never again bother you. I did not intend to kill him, but it was unavoidable. He tried to stick the knife into me, and I turned its point upon himself with fatal effect."

"He deserved his fate," said the girl; "but it seems terrible to think of."

"Yes, indeed; but I will free you from the rope which binds you, Miss Chandler."

"How did you know my name?" the girl asked as Dick was cutting the rope with the knife taken from the stiffening hand of the major.

"Ernest Saunders told me your name."

"Ah, yes!" eagerly. "And is he—was it true what you told—him," indicating the dead man, "about Ernest? Will he get well?"

"Oh, yes, I am sure that he will."

"Oh, you make me so happy!"

"Ernest is seriously wounded, but not fatally. He will have to keep to his bed for two or three weeks, and be carefully nursed, but he will not die."

"And I will nurse him!" cried the girl, her eyes shining.

"You can be a great help to his mother, at any rate," said Dick; "but what about your father, Colonel Chandler? He will object to your remaining there and nursing a 'rebel,' will he not?"

"I won't let him know where I am."

"Ah, so that is the way you will work it, eh?" smiled Dick.

"Yes."

"But will he not be very anxious regarding you?"

"I will send him a message telling him that I am well and getting along splendidly, and that he need not worry about me."

"True; you can do that. And now, Miss Chandler, if you will permit me, I will place you, dry-shod, on the other side of the stream."

The girl protested that it would not hurt her to get wet feet, but the "Liberty Boy" said there was no need of her getting her feet wet, and laughingly took her in his

arms and carried her across the stream and deposited her on her feet on dry ground.

"Now I will call my men to this place and we will then be ready to start back to the home of Ernest Saunders," said Dick. As he spoke he drew two pistols, and, cocking them, fired them off, one after the other.

"That is the signal that was agreed upon when one of us was successful in finding you, Miss Chandler," explained Dick.

"Ah, I understand," the girl said; and then she added "You have not yet told me your name. I would like to know to whom it is that I am indebted for my rescue from the hands of that terrible man," with a shuddering glance at the still form of Major Morgan.

"My name?" smiled Dick. "It is Slater—Dick Slater."

"Dick Slater!" exclaimed the girl, staring at the youth with interest. "Why, I have heard my father speak of you frequently."

"And he said nothing good of me, doubtless," smiled Dick.

"Oh, he did not say anything bad of you," the girl hastened to say. "Father is a very fair man, even if he is a British officer, and is always ready to give credit where credit is due, and I have heard him speak of you in terms of admiration. He said that if all the 'rebels,' as you are called by the British, were like you there would be no such thing as triumphing over you."

"I fear he has too high an opinion of me," said Dick.

"I don't think so, judging by what I have seen. You have just rescued me from that man at the risk of your life, and seem to think nothing of it, and that is just what might have been expected of you, judging by what I have heard father say about you."

"Oh, that was nothing more than any man would have done, Miss Chandler. And, besides, I had promised my friend Saunders that I would bring you safely back, or die trying; had promised him on my honor, and I had to keep my promise, don't you see?"

"Yes, but I know you would have kept it, anyway, and that you would have done the same thing had you not known who I was and had made no promise to any one."

"I will acknowledge that that is true, miss," was the quiet reply. "I have a sister of my own, and a sweetheart too, and I simply have done for you what I would wish any man to do for either of them, should the necessity arise."

"I understand."

The "Liberty Boys" began putting in an appearance now, one after another, until all the dozen who had started

on the trail of the fugitive British officer were present. Dick quickly and tersely told the story of his encounter with the major, and ordered the youths to bury the body.

This was quickly done and then the little party, with the rescued maiden in its midst, started on the back track. It was a walk of an hour to the road, and of another fifteen minutes to the cabin home of Ernest Saunders, to which came all the rest of the "Liberty Boys" had gone, taking the horses with them.

When they got to the house it was found that the wounded patriot was resting easy and was strong and cheerful; and when Dick entered the room and told him that Jennie had been rescued and was in the house, ready to come to him, Ernest's face shone for joy.

"Ah! you are a true comrade, Dick!" he said, feelingly. "The honor of the 'Liberty Boys' is beyond dispute, and when you make a promise it is kept."

"Yes, if it is possible to keep a promise we will do it every time," said Dick; "and now, old man, I will send some one in to see you."

The 'some one' was Jennie, of course, and when she saw how bright and cheerful-looking her affianced was, she was delighted.

"Oh, Ernest, I am so glad to find you so well!" she murmured, stooping over him and kissing him tenderly; "I thought when I saw you go down, when those men were attacking you, that you were dead, but you will live, won't you—you will live for me?"

"Yes, indeed, little sweetheart! I will live for you! I am worth a dozen dead men. I'll be all right in a week or so."

"Yes, your mother and I will nurse you, and if good friends will help any, then you will get well rapidly."

"What! you will help nurse me?" cried Ernest, in surprise.

"Yes; why not?"

"But your father——"

"He need not know where I am. Do you think I would go back to Savannah when you needed me, Ernest? No, no; I will stay here by your side and help your mother nurse you and take care of you. I will send a message to father, telling him that I am safe and that he need not worry about me, but I won't let him know where I am."

"You are the best and sweetest little sweetheart any man ever had, Jennie!" exclaimed Ernest, in delight, and then the girl kissed him and told him to keep quiet and be a good boy, which he promised to do.

CHAPTER IX.

THE COLONEL RECEIVES A LETTER.

Next morning Colonel Chandler sat at the breakfast-table alone. There was a frown on the colonel's face.

"Why don't Jennie come to breakfast?" he murmured. "She is not usually late."

Just then the colored girl, Sarah, passed the door and the officer called out: "Isn't your mistress up yet, Sarah?"

"I doan' think she is, Massa Cunnel," was the reply; and if the colonel had been acutely observant he would have noticed that the colored girl's voice trembled and that its owner looked frightened.

"Well, go and call her at once."

"Yes, Massa Cunnel."

"Tell her breakfast is on the table and getting cold."

"Yes, Massa Cunnel."

The girl hastened away, but returned a few minutes later and tremblingly entered the room. She looked so pale and perturbed that the officer could not fail to note it, now, and he looked at her in surprise.

"What's the matter, Sarah?" he asked.

"De young missus, sah!"

"Well, what of her?" in a brisk, almost harsh voice, for the colonel was overcome by a sudden fear that something had happened to his daughter.

"She hain't in her room, sah!"

"Isn't in her room?" The colonel stared at the girl, and seemed somewhat dazed.

"No, sah; an'—an'——"

"Well, out with it!" fiercely.

"Her baid wuzn' slep' in last' night ertall, sah!"

"What! Her bed was not slept in last night, you say?"

"No, sah; au' Missy Jinnie hain't in de house nowhars, sah. Sam'n me hez looked ever'whar, sah!"

"Her bed not slept in—she not in the house!" murmured the colonel. "What can it mean?"

At this moment Sam appeared at the dining-room door, and said: "Dere's a man wants ter see yo', Massa Cunnel."

"Where is he?"

"In de front hall, sah."

"Show him in here at once."

"Yes, sah!" and Sam vanished.

Somehow the colonel jumped to the conclusion that the man might bring news of his daughter; he could not have explained why he should think so, but the idea had come

to him, and when the stranger was ushered into the room the colonel looked at him eagerly.

The newcomer was a young man of perhaps twenty years of age; he was bronzed and handsome, and there was a manly look about his face that impressed the British officer at once. Before the colonel could speak the young man said:

"I am the bearer of a message from your daughter, sir; and here it is. I will say that she is well and happy, so read the message at your ease and leisure."

The colonel took the letter, which was addressed to him in the handwriting of his daughter, and opening it read as follows:

"DEAR FATHER—You will be surprised to get this letter, and will no doubt be pained by its contents, but you must remember that the life happiness of your daughter is at stake, and then it will not be so hard on you.

"Father, I am the promised wife of a patriot—a 'rebel,' as we were always wont to call them, and while I know the knowledge will cause you pain, yet when you know how much I love him and how happy I shall be as his wife, you will not feel it so keenly. You have heard of him; his name is Ernest Saunders, and he is one of nature's noblemen. He is seriously wounded, however, and I shall remain at his bedside until he is well again, which may be three weeks, possibly a month. And now, father, I wish to tell you something which will surprise you: Major Morgan was a cowardly scoundrel, and last night he and his men set upon Ernest, as he was talking to me not far from the spot where I first met him, and after they had wounded him and left him for dead, they were forced to flee by the coming of some horsemen; but Major Morgan, who has been trying to make love to me for weeks, seized me and carried me away, a prisoner, into the timber. He was followed, however, by Dick Slater and some of his 'Liberty Boys,' and Dick Slater himself overtook us and engaged the major in a combat, which resulted in the major's death—which was richly merited, as you will, I think, admit. There is no knowing what would have been my fate had not Mr. Slater so bravely rescued me.

"And now, I will introduce the bearer of this message. He is no other than Dick Slater, himself, of whom I have often heard you speak with admiration, and to whom we both owe much for his rescue of me from the hands of Major Morgan. I know that Mr. Slater is safe in your hands, father, and that you will honor the confidence which we both have placed in you, and that he will be permitted to leave Savannah without hindrance.

"And now, please, dear father, do not take this too much to heart. Ernest is a noble man, and will make me a noble husband; I shall be happy with him; would have been miserable all my life without him; so bear with me and do not be angry, and when this cruel war is ended I hope that you two, my husband and my father, will meet as friends, and that you will learn to know and respect each other. Do not try to find me, father, for I do not wish you to do so, and I do not think you could possibly find me anyway. Rest easy; I am happy, and will be well taken care of. Ernest is the comrade and dear friend of Dick Slater and his hundred 'Liberty Boys,' and they are here ready to fight for me to the death, as they know I am to be Ernest's wife. Oh, father, I like the brave patriots more and more, the more I see them; I am sure there can be nowhere in the world one hundred finer, nobler, better men than the hundred 'Liberty boys.' How I wish that you did not have to fight against the patriots, father!

"Good-by, from your loving daughter, JENNIE."

The colonel read the letter through and then folded it and, placing it in his pocket, advanced and extended his hand.

"So you are Dick Slater?" he remarked, eyeing the youth with interest: "Captain Slater, I am pleased to make your acquaintance. I have heard many stories of your valor, of your wonderful doings, and I am proud to know you."

"And I am proud to make the acquaintance of the father of so brave and noble-hearted a girl as your daughter, sir," said Dick.

The two shook hands, cordially, and then the colonel said: "Have you had breakfast, Captain Slater?"

"I ate a bite before starting to Savannah, sir," was the reply.

"Then you must be hungry by this time; sit up to the table and take breakfast with me. The table is set for two, as I expected my daughter to breakfast with me; and now that she cannot do so it is fitting that you, who bring me news of her, should occupy the place she would have occupied."

"Thank you," said Dick, and he took a seat at the table.

When Dick was ready to go the colonel took his hand and pressed it warmly. "Captain Slater," he said, "I wish to ask you just one favor before you go."

"What is it, sir?"

"That you will give me your word of honor, as a soldier, that no harm shall come to my daughter while away from me. Will you do it?"

"With pleasure, Colonel Chandler. I give you my word of honor that no harm shall come to her. You need have no fears whatever on her account. She is among friends; myself and my hundred 'Liberty Boys' will fight to the death for her, if necessary. But it will not be necessary; he is the affianced of as noble-hearted a man as lives to-day."

"Thank you, Captain Slater; I shall feel perfectly at ease regarding my daughter. And now how long will it take you to get out of the city—outside our lines?"

"Thirty minutes, colonel."

"Very well, I will wait thirty minutes and then will start men on your trail and attempt to capture you; that is my duty as a soldier. Good-by, Captain Slater, and good luck to you."

Dick saluted and withdrew. Mounting his horse he rode out of Savannah and headed westward. He was mounted on Major, a magnificent horse with Arabian blood in his veins, and the youth rode like the wind. The redcoats gave chase to him, without doubt, but they never got in sight of him.

When Dick told Jennie Chandler how matter-of-fact had been her father's manner of taking the news conveyed in the letter, the girl's face lighted up.

"Dear father!" she murmured. "He loves me so dearly that he cares for nothing save that I may be happy. We will yet see the time when he and Ernest will shake hands and be friends."

And such proved to be the case. When Ernest Saunders was well he and Jennie were married, and when the war ended Colonel Chandler, instead of returning to England, went to their home and spent the rest of his days there.

And in the Saunders' home no persons in all the world were held in such great esteem as were Dick Slater and his brave "Liberty Boys."

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